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TOMB RAIDER 2

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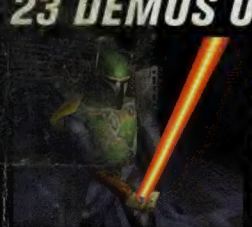
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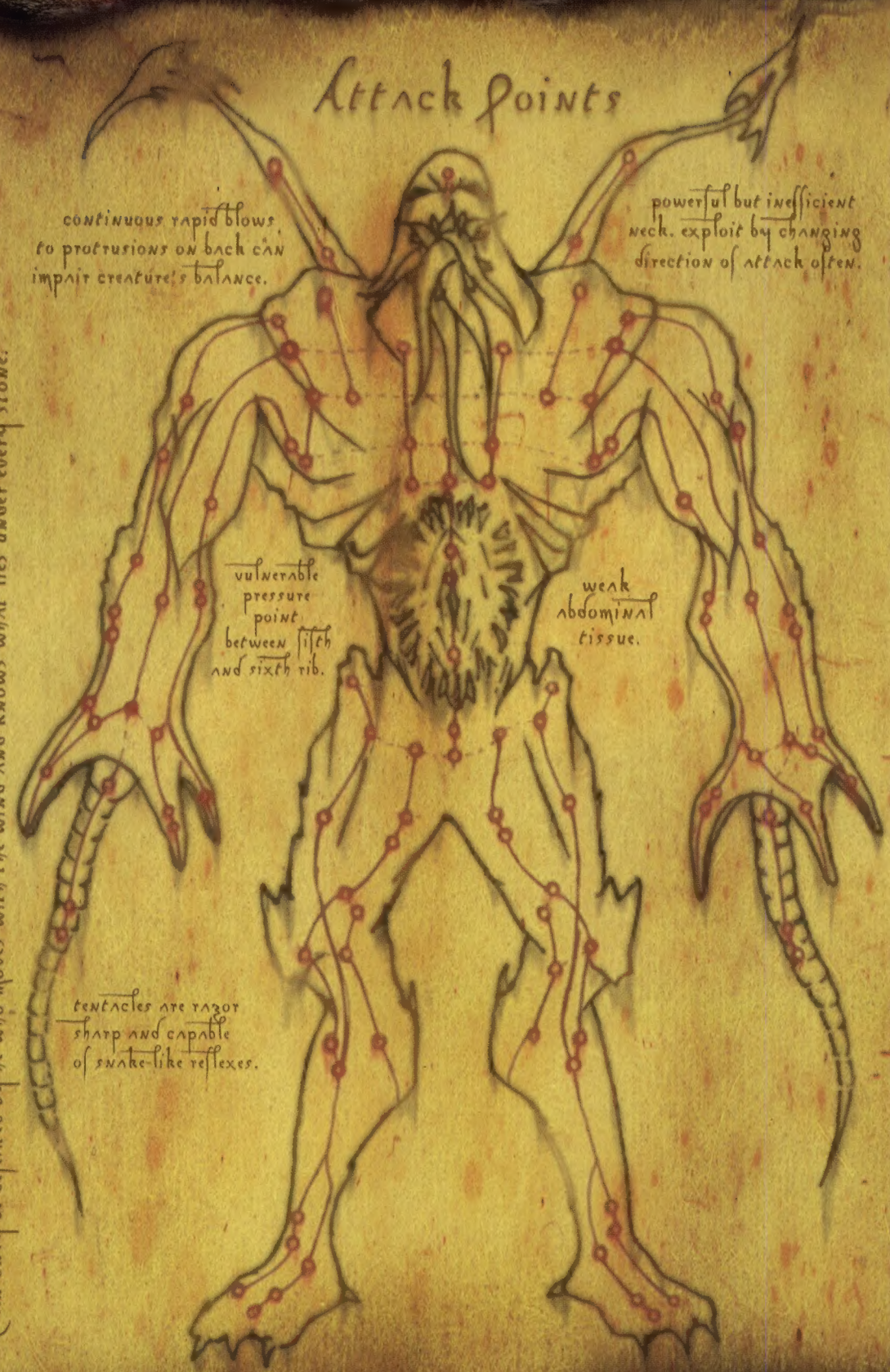
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Check out the playable demo in select magazines or download it from our Web site at www.lucasarts.com

LUCAS Arts

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Attack Points



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12 new weapons to wreak havoc with.

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5 mysterious new spells.







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NOVEMBER 1997

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What we're playing: Jedi Knight, Total Annihilation, Age of Empires, G-Police, Abe's Oddysee, Championship Manager Enhanced, Dark Reign, International Rally Championship.

Cover CD slip art: Jedi Knight running at 1024 X 768 resolution at 25fps+ sustained on a P200MMX with VideoLogic Apocalypse 5D (PowerVR2).

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Editorial



Gamers, we have arrived. Only a couple of years ago things were pretty much as they'd always been. You know, gaming hard, alone, in a dark room late at night. It was the way things were and nothing looked like ever changing. New games to look forward to, yes, and thoughts of whatever CPU Intel had just released perhaps, but that was all that concerned us. It was a simple and content life.

Things have changed a bit. Games are now a big time, mainstream, all over the place phenomenon. Game advertisements on TV! Who'd have ever thought... Not just ads either, but coverage on the news and current affairs shows whenever they get a whiff of anything slightly controversial. Controversy! Who'd have ever thought...

Everyone wants in too. These days your average FMV sequence is more likely to feature the likes of Bruce Willis than Mark Hamill or Kirk Cameron. Oliver Stone doing a special guest direction for an intro can't be far off.

Then there's the technology. For a decade neither Intel or Microsoft - or ANY of the major players in the emerging PC business for that matter, none even acknowledged the existence of games and the people who play them. Now we have DirectX and the Talisman 3D standard from Microsoft, AGP from Intel and one or a few products specifically for gamers from all the rest. Then there's 3D accelerators, 80 million sold so far and picking up speed. Amazing. They all want in...

This is all good, of course. But you can't help being cynical. Games have always pushed the envelope. No other form of software evolved as rapidly or as dramatically, more importantly, no other form of software made such heavy demands on the hardware running it. "Power Users" the industry used to call those who needed the gruntiest machines, but they were referring to accountants and CAD/CAM users, not gamers. We were ignored, not officially recognised. No great slap in the face that, but look at how fast gaming technology is moving now that the "serious" side of the PC industry has noticed how much money is to be made. Makes you wonder what's we'd be playing on now if they'd figured this out a decade ago...

This enthusiasm is rampant in the publishing scene. The sheer number of games out this Xmas is staggering. Everyone wants in. There are simply too many good games around. The gamers they're all targeting will only be ably to buy a couple or a few, and the wild profits the publishers expect just aren't going to happen. It's great for us, we get a huge choice, but the money to be made is being spread too thinly. Next Xmas will be interesting. Fewer, better games and a host of corporate acquisitions between now and they as the majors soak up the little companies to give themselves more of the market. But there will be more little companies with big hits. They all want in.

Meanwhile, back in the dark room late at night, we're playing better and bigger games than we'd ever imagined were possible. The winner at the end of the day is the game itself. Merry Xmas gamers.

Ben

The PC PowerPlay scoring system

90%+ A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.

80-90% A strong, eminently platable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 months time.

60-80% Competant and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.

40-60% Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift

0-40% Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible

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How to run it, what to do once it's running and a few little pics along with the World's Smallest Game Reviews.

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THE ULTIMATE XMAS HAMPER! 26
We have competitions and we have the PowerPlay Big Xmas Comp. Can you believe what's on offer here? Over $15,000 worth of gaming desirables! Truly amazing. Get involved.



GAME JOBS: ANIMATOR 28
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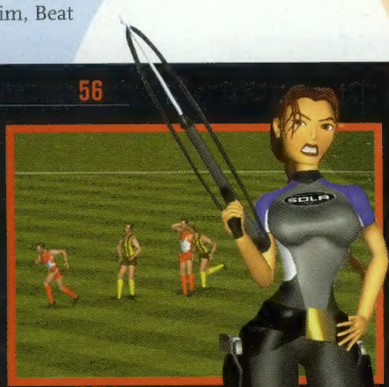
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Dumb name, great game. Begin is the original and best Star Trek strategic combat game. No 3D, no William Shatner, just magic gameplay.

QUAKE WAS JUST FOREPLAY

200 Deathmatch capability

Totally NEW game. Totally NEW monsters with IQs the size of their APPETITE for FRESH blood (this time they can evade your ATTACK, strategically position themselves for an ambush, and HUNT your ass down). Totally new environments with falling rocks to dodge, rockets to duck, shadows to HIDE in, narrow shafts to CRAWL through, and plenty of room to SATISFY your primal urges.







"Quake II is not just an upgrade. It's an entirely new game - a generation above and beyond anything you've ever seen before."
— PC Gamer Oct 1997

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CD GUIDE

MERRY CHRISTMAS! MAY YOU GET ALL THE GAMES YOU WERE HOPING FOR! TO TRY AND HELP YOU MAKE THAT ALL IMPORTANT DECISION (WHICH GAMES TO GET YOURSELF FOR PRESENTS), WE'VE GONE CRAZY, CRAZY, CRAZY AND ATTEMPTED TO PUT AS MANY GAMES AS POSSIBLE ON THIS MONTH'S COVER CD. WE HOPE YOU DON'T MIND THE LACK OF UTILITIES THIS MONTH, BUT WE THINK THE QUALITY OF THE DEMOS MORE THEN MAKES UP FOR IT.

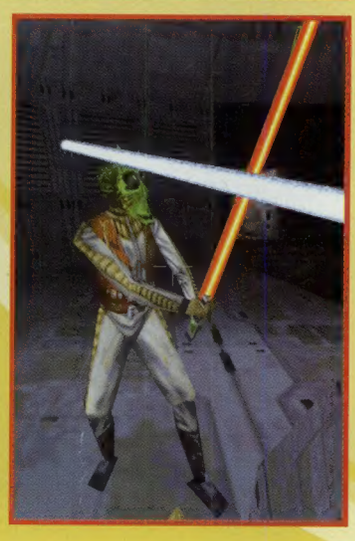
23 DEMOS

REMEMBER, EVERY EFFORT HAS BEEN TAKEN TO ENSURE THE COVER CD WILL WORK ON AS WIDE A VARIETY OF MACHINES AS POSSIBLE, BUT IF YOU TRY A GAME, AND IT RUNS OFF THE CD TOO SLOWLY, OR SOUND DOESN'T WORK ETC. TRY USING THE INSTALL FUNCTION TO COPY IT TO YOUR HARD DRIVE.

IF THE UNTHINKABLE HAPPENS AND THE INSTALL PROCEDURE FAILS, NOTE THE TITLE OF EACH GAME IN THIS GUIDE. THE 3RD LINE LISTS THE DIRECTORY THE GAME IS LOCATED ON THE CD. JUST COPY THE DIRECTORY OFF THE CD TO YOUR HARD DRIVE, AND RUN THE EXECUTABLE MANUALLY.







CD Tech

Win 95

Running the Powerplay CD under Win 95 is best. All the games will appear on the menu and run, whether Win 95 or DOS.

CLICK ON THE POWERWIN ICON

DOS

Around half the games are DOS. The Powerplay DOS menu will only show DOS games

TYPE PCPOWER AT THE CD PROMPT (PROBABLY D:)

Win 3.1x

Some games will run under Win3.1x. The Powerplay menu won't work under Win3.1x, so run them straight from the CD with File Manager

RUN STRAIGHT FROM CD

Jedi Knight Dark Forces II

LucasArts
Windows 95 Action
\games\win95\jedi

A highly anticipated release, Jedi Knight returns you to the Star Wars universe as Kyle Katarn. A young mercenary that successfully infiltrated the Empire you now embark on a quest into Kyles' past and learn the mysterious ways of the Jedi.

This demo includes one mission from the single player story, and one multiplayer level. The single player mission joins the story about 1/3 into the game, so that you can get a feel for the use of some of the weapons and force-powers available. When you create a new character, you will start with the lightsaber and 4 of the 12 forcepowers available in the retail game.

System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game is controlled using a mouse. This game supports the 3Dfx/ Direct 3D
See keyboard/mouse configuration screen for control summary.

Age of Empires

Microsoft
Windows 95 Real-time strategy
\games\win95\aoedemo

At PowerPlay Gold status, you can bet that Age of Empires is a mighty fine game. It's not only a different game each time you play. It's a different game, period. Beautiful graphics, twelve civilisations, a comprehensive technology tree, dozens of units, randomly generated maps, and a rich sound-

track. Set within a historical context, as opposed to a fictional world, it all add up to a pretty darn complete gaming experience.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game is controlled using a mouse.

Need for Speed 2 Special Edition

Electronic Arts
Windows 95 Racing
\games\win95\nfs2
Put the brand new Ferrari 355 F1(tm) through its paces on the beautiful new Mexican track. For the 3Dfx only, this technology demo really gives us something to hope for with its eye watering frame rate and hyper-smooth graphics.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard, 3Dfx.
This game supports a Joystick.
Up = Accelerate
Down = Brake
Left and Right = Steer
SPACE = Handbrake
A = Shift up
Z = Shift down
C = Change camera mode
H = Horn
TAB = Take screen shot
F2 = Toggle chrome mapping
F3 = View distance adjustment
F4 = Toggle horizon
F5 = HUD adjustment
F8 = Toggle music
F9 = Toggle sounds
F10 = Gamma correction
Esc = Pause
While in pause:
F1 = Toggle pause menu
F2 = Rotate clockwise
F3 = Toggle camera movement
F4 = Rotate counter clockwise


Age of Empires

Tomb Raider 2

Eidos Interactive
Win95 3rd person adventure
\tomb2
Lara is back looking better then ever. The latest in the highly successful 3rd person perspective adventure game, this demo gives you a taste of the Great Wall element of the full game.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad. This game supports the 3Dfx/Direct 3D
Esc = Menu / Inventory
Up = Run forward
Down = Hop backwards
Left = Turn Left
Right = Turn Right
Shift (with direction) = Walk
Alt (with direction) = Jump
Space = Draw Weapon
Ctrl (With weapon drawn) = Fire
Ctrl (when facing an object) = Climb, Press, pickup, push, pull, manipulate.

STOP PRESS

The Tomb Raider 2 demo has a bit of a big problem. Mere hours before this magazine's deadline we got a frantic call from Eidos Interactive/Core Design in the UK. The demo they'd sent by international courier for inclusion on the PCPP CD won't work unless a few special things are done. Unfortunately word of this came only after 40,000 CDs had been pressed... Fantastic! It seems some bright spark at Eidos fixed the demo so it will only work up until 21/10/97... We're sorry about this, but the steps you need to take are fairly straightforward:

1. Run the demo.
2. You will receive an error message, ignore this.
3. Double click your clock in your taskbar.
4. Set the clock to September.
5. Select START, RUN and type REGEDIT.
6. Select the folder HKEY_CURRENT_USER.
7. Select the folder SOFTWARE.
8. Select the folder CORE DESIGN.
9. Delete the folder TOMB RAIDER II.
10. Run the demo.

Eidos Interactive accept no liability for any problems that arise from the incorrect implementation of this procedure.
Neither do PC PowerPlay, we're really sorry about it though...

Mage Slayer

Raven
Windows 95 Action
\games\win95\magedemo
From the creators of HEXEN comes Mageslayer. In the style of Take No prisoners (a top down perspective shooter) you play a mage that has sunk down into the bowels of darkness and brought back a soul-destroying evil. Oops, better cover up your mistake by mass slaughtering said evil.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard
This game supports a Mouse/ Joystick/Gamepad.
This game supports the 3Dfx/Direct 3D.
RIGHTARROW = turnright
LEFTARROW = turnleft
UPARROW = forward
DOWNARROW = backward
< = strafe left
> = strafe right
ALT = attack 2
CTRL = attack
/ = jump
x = jump
SHIFT = strafe
SPACE = look
CAPS = speed toggle
T = say
R = say to team
Y = say to person
PAUSE = pause
- = Screen size down
= = Screen size up
z = zoom toggle
****** = toggle inventory



[= previous item
] = next item
ENTER = use item
D = drop item
F12 = quit

Galapagos

Electronic Arts
Windows 95 Puzzle
\games\win95\galdemo
Galapagos features rich, 3D texture-mapped worlds, with continuous- motion graphics and 6 degrees of freedom. Dramatic camera movement and incredible lighting effects make your passage through Galapagos breathtaking. Explosions and other chilling effects will make you fear for your synthetic friend. Active panning 3D stereo sound will draw you into the exotic worlds of Galapagos.
This is a must-try game that breaks new ground in gameplay. A refreshing change to see a big company like Electronic Arts daring to be different with this revolutionary game.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard
This game is controlled using a Mouse. This game supports the 3Dfx/Direct 3D.



Turok Dinosaur hunter

Acclaim
Windows 95 First Person Action
\games\win95\turok
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter is an absolutely brilliant first-person shooter to rival Quake 2. Based on the comic of the same game Turok is 3Dfx only and makes absolute use of the card.
If you have seen this on the N64, you'll be amazed at how much better the PC version looks.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard, 3Dfx. This game is controlled using a Mouse / Joystick / Gamepad. This game supports the 3Dfx.

Powerplay 98

Electronic Arts
Windows 95 Sports sim
\games\win95\pp98demo
With the ability to make real Hockey Moves from fake shots, stumble passes and one-timers to dump-ins, deflections and hooking, Powerplay is the premiere Hockey sim to date.
PP98 however also supports accurate skating, and if you have a 3Dfx, absolutely amazing 3D motion-captured player models.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game is controlled using a Mouse / Joystick / Gamepad.
This game supports the 3Dfx / Direct 3D

International Rally Championship

Europress
Windows 95 Racing
\games\win95\ircd3d
International Rally Championship is the fourth in the Europress highly successful series of motoring simulations. Listening to the comments of existing Rally Players they've implemented many suggested ideas.
System requirements: Pentium 75, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game is controlled using a Joystick / Gamepad.
This game supports the 3Dfx / Direct 3D

Civil War Generals 2

Sierra
Win 95 Turn-based strategy
\games\win95\cwg2demo
Sierras' new Civil War Generals 2 allows you to rewrite history, or relive it. You can play as either Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Sherman or Jackson? Within the campaign, CWG2 takes into account morale, supply shipments and the obligatory considerations of combat such as terrain advantages and weapons strength and effectiveness against the target.
System requirements: 486 DX2/66, 8Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game is controlled using a mouse.

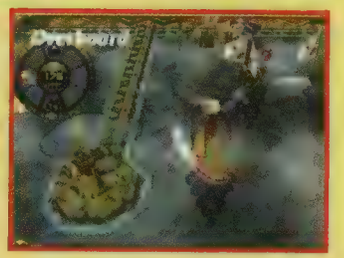
KKnD Extreme Demo

Melbourne House (Beam)
Win 95 Real-time strategy
\games\win95\kkndxtme
Good to see some work from the guys down under. Before Dark Reign and Total Annihilation, Beam was ahead of the bunch. With a user interface that allowed players to build multiple units simultaneously and queue up unit build orders and Rendered SVGA graphics KKND was truly in front. Xtreme is for those who loved Kill Krush and Destroy and crave after more missions.
System requirements: Pentium 75, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game is controlled using a mouse.
A = Form Alliance (network play)
ESC = Takes you to the in-game menu during a game, and also takes you back one screen in the options/game setup before the game begins.
CTRL+1 through to CTRL+0 = Assigns a unit or group to that number key.
1 through to 0 = Selects the assigned unit or group (selected with CTRL+number).
ALT+1 through to ALT+0 = Selects the assigned unit or group and centres the screen on the group.
TAB = Turns the radar on and off.
CURSOR KEYS = Scroll the map.
CTRL+M = Send message in multiplayer game.
ENTER = Centres the screen on your Outpost/Clanhall.



Overboard

Psygnosis
Windows 95 Arcade
\games\win95\swidemo
Overboard allows you to Captain a heavily armed galleon on a quest to annihilate your pirate nemesis, Blowfleet, and discover long-lost treasures. Nothing near a Galleon-esq simulation Shipwreckers in that true Psygnosis style oozes both simplicity and infinite playability. Destroy enemy strongholds, ports and shipyards while building a fleet of swashbuckling ships armed with cannons, depth charges and flame throwers. If you have a 3Dfx prepare for some mind blowing 3D within a beautifully detailed environment as it supports 800 x 600 for the Voodoo.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game Supports a Joystick / Gamepad. This game supports the 3Dfx / Direct 3D
See the Game title screen for the Keyboard commands



Pax Imperia

THQ
Windows 95 Real-time Strategy
\games\win95\paxdemo
We've all been waiting for Pax Imperia, but never totally certain what it would entail. Nor do we think the developers were really sure it changing developers almost as must as the description on the web page. Now that the demo is here though, we can see that it is Masters of Orion 2 in real time. YES!
Once colonies are established, they can either be left alone or carefully managed. To excel in this gigantic real-time environment you will have to juggle economics, research and develop



hundreds of technologies, build your planet's assets, and establish solid domestic and foreign relations. Your trusted advisers will assist you, but the fate of your people lies with you, and you alone. If you're new to the Masters of Orion strategy genre, stick with it, it's got a steep learning curve, but eminently worth it.
System requirements: 486 DX/100, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game is controlled with the mouse.

Men in Black demo

SouthPeak Interactive
Windows 95 Adventure
\games\win95\mib
MIB could have been a cheap first person shooter relegated to the constant yawn category, but instead, SouthPeak have intelligibly turned it into an Action adventure in the style of Alone in the Dark.
Featuring some extremely well detailed 3D objects this demo holds a lot of promise for the final version.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game is controlled with the mouse.
UP Arrow = Walk Forward
DOWN Arrow = Walk Backward
LEFT Arrow = Turn Left
RIGHT Arrow = Turn Right
ALT UP Arrow = Attack Kick
ALT DOWN Arrow = Block
ALT LEFT Arrow = Attack Left
ALT RIGHT Arrow = Attack Right
SHIFT UP Arrow = Run Forwards
SHIFT DOWN Arrow = Run Backwards
SHIFT LEFT Arrow = Quick Turn Left
SHIFT RIGHT Arrow = Quick Turn
INS = Toggle Icons
CTRL ALT LEFT Arrow= Dodge Left
CTRL ALT RIGHT Arrow = Dodge Right
CTRL UP Arrow = Jump Forward/Up
CTRL LEFT Arrow = Jump Left
CTRL RIGHT Arrow = Jump Right

Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far

Microsoft
Windows 95 Real Time Strategy
\games\win95\ccabtf
Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far is a real-time, historically accurate World War II strategy game that puts you in command of either the Allied or Axis forces during the epic Operation Market Garden battle in German controlled Holland.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game is controlled with the mouse.





Rayman Gold

Ubisoft
Windows 95 Horizontally Scrolling Platform
\games\dos\raygold
Enter the challenging, mind-altering world of Rayman and, suddenly, reality seems far too tame. Free your mind as Rayman takes you on an arduous adventure through a complex realm of psychedelic landscapes, absurd characters, formidable opponents, and uncharted levels of dementia.
You'll experience a heightened sense of visual awareness. You'll hear strange and beautiful sounds. Endless legions of bizarre creatures will be out to get you. One trip into Rayman's kaleidoscopic domain and you'll be addicted.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game is controlled with a Joystick / Analog Gamepad.

iF-16

Interactive Magic
Windows 95 Flight Simulator
\games\win95
Take to the skies in an F-16 equipped with the latest technological upgrades, and fight your way through three future war zones: Korea, Cyprus, and Israel. Dozens of air and ground vehicles participate on both sides of every mission to create a sense total immersion in the war — even the infantry are 3D modeled and totally reactive!
System requirements: Pentium 75, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports a Joystick.

Worms 2

MicroProse
Windows 95 Turn based Trajectory
\games\win95\worms2
Worms 2 is a turn based game where up to 6 players can participate in any given match. You command a platoon of Worms who inhabit a randomly generated terrain, it's time to do or die, put up or shut up, you must destroy the other Worms with an assortment of devastating weapons. This is by far the best of all the "Scorched Earth" type games.
System requirements: Pentium 75, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
Left - Walk Left





both story and intensity. Featuring 360 degree aiming like in abuse, the full version has more than two dozen interconnected single player levels (full version), and eight multiplayer Deathmatch arenas.
System requirements: Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.





Joint Strike Fighter

Eidos Interactive
Windows 95 Flight Simulation
\games\win95\jfsdemo
This demo allows you to fly and explore the JSF world for FOUR minutes. You start on a runway near a port city in Colombia. Colombian drug lords have sent converted military ground and air units to take the base. You need to defend the base and secure the area. Good Luck!
Not to sound like a broken record, but unbelievable on the 3Dfx with rain effects and particle based clouds.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports a Joystick / Gamepad. This game supports the 3Dfx / Direct 3D

Right - Walk right
Up - change Trajectory
Down change Trajectory
Space - Fire (Hold down to fire further)

Dark Angael

Vicarious Visions, Inc.
Windows 95 Horizontally Scrolling Platform
\games\win95\darkdemo
Dark Angael is a side-scrolling action/adventure game, rich in both story and intensity. Featuring 360 degree aiming like in abuse, the full version has more than two dozen interconnected single player levels (full version), and eight multiplayer Deathmatch arenas.
System requirements: Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.



Incubation

Blue byte
Win 95 Turn based Strategy
\games\win95\incdemo
Incubation is just Like Xcom 1 and 2 but utilising totally 3D characters. You gear up some marines and a squad commander and lead them through hostile alien environments with limited ammo and mission objectives to achieve.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard.
This game is controlled using a mouse. This game supports the 3Dfx / Direct 3D

Forced Alliance

Ripcord
Windows 95 Space Sim
\games\win95\fapdemo
Forced Alliance is a Space Combat sim in the style of the Wing Commander. Different to the Wing Commander however is that a promotion in rank will actually bring more responsibility within the game.
System requirements: Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports a Joystick/ Gamepad.This game supports the 3Dfx/Direct 3D
A = Autopilot (takes you to the next waypoint)
C = Communications (use this to get landing clearance at the end of the mission!)
Tab = Afterburner
E = Select Enemy Targets
T = Select any Target
G = Select Guns
M = Select Missiles
Space = Fire Guns
Enter = Fire Missiles (HS"Heat Seek" and RG"Radar Guided" require target lock before firing)
Z = Match Target Speed
H = Toggles HUD
L = Toggles Radar Lock (on target)
D = Damage Display
S = Shield Display
W = Weapon Display

Counter Action

Ripcord
Windows 95 Space Sim
\games\win95\fapdemo
Counter Action is a Real Time WW2 strategy game from Russia (Alexy isn't the only one who can write games) that uses actual WW2 units such as infantry (Russian), Supply trucks and tanks.
System requirements: 486 DX/66, 16Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game is controlled using a mouse.

DOS TROUBLESHOOTING

The most likely cause of any problem is a shortage of [illegible] memory. It's not [illegible] with how much RAM is on your system, but how it's set up. To find out how much is available for the games, type MEM /C \MORE. Look for a line that reads LARGEST EXECUTABLE PROGRAM SIZE, if it's over 550k then everything should run. If it's under that figure, you'll need to edit your system files to sort it out.
The easiest way is to use the MAKE BOOT DISK facility found on most game installation menus. If you'd prefer not to do that, then you'll need to manually edit your two configuration files - the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT.
To do so, type EDIT CONFIG.SYS and EDIT AUTOEXEC.BAT. In the CONFIG.SYS file, the most likely culprit is EMM386.EXE. You don't need it for the majority of games, so put REM at the start of the line. This will disable it. In the AUTOEXEC.BAT look to see if you are running SMARTDRV, if it's there, put REM at the start.
These two simple measures should overcome most problems. If you're still running short on conventional memory (the game should give you an error message telling you how much more you need), then a boot disk is the best solution.
THE PC POWERPLAY CD - The games on the CD are designed to be run in different ways. Some can be run straight from the disc, while others need to be [illegible] usually prompt you with a choice of where it will install to, so take note!
Many of the games which run from the CD will only produce sound effects if you have a Sound Blaster compatible sound card set to default settings. That's 99% of you, so if you get no sound you're best copying the game to your hard drive, then running the setup program - usually INSTALL, SETUP, CONFIG or SOUNDSET. As with all problems PC, trial and error is the only true solution. Feel free to copy an entire game to your hard drive. Also copy a game from the CD if it mysteriously refuses to install. Then run the INSTALL file from the hard drive.
DISCLAIMER - All possible care is taken while selecting, testing and installing the software which is included on the PC PowerPlay CD. Next Publishing accepts no responsibility for data loss or other damage which may occur during its use. If your CD is clearly faulty, send it in for free replacement to:
PC PowerPlay - CD Returns,
78 Renwick St, Redfern
NSW 2016
SUPPORT - cdtech@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

UTILITIES

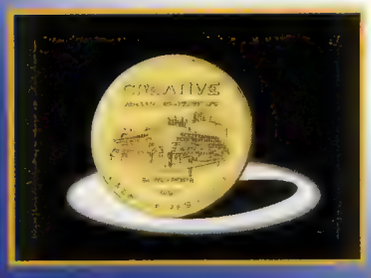
Multiplayer Client
This is the latest Client of the Multiplay software that allows you to connect to their service and play online games with other players across Australia.

Win Gold before the Games!

3 Winners every week!



Win exclusive Sound Blaster AWE64 GOLD Coins worth around $500 each!



Win, Win, Win!
If you purchase a Sound Blaster AWE64 Gold or Sound Blaster AWE64 Value sound card between the 1st of November 1997 and 2nd of January 1998, you will be eligible to enter the AWE64 WIN GOLD Competition.

How to enter?
Easy, just fill in the attached coupon or go to your Sound Blaster retail outlet and pick up an entry form there. Then simply fill in your details and send it in together with your warranty card to be in the draw.

3 Winners a Week!
Every week, between the 1st of November to the 2nd of January 1998, 3 lucky people will be announced as proud owners of a Solid Gold Coin from Creative Technology Ltd, valued at approximately $500 each!

So be the first to finish as a Gold Coin is waiting for you in the Sound Blaster AWE64 WIN GOLD Competition.

Creative Pacific Pty Ltd
32-34 Dickson Ave Artarmon NSW 2064
Tel (02) 9906 8887 Fax (02) 9906 5577
Web Site http://www.cppl.com.au

entry form

To be eligible for the draw, you must complete this entry form and send it together with your warranty card that is found inside a Sound Blaster AWE64 Gold, Sound Blaster AWE64 Value or Multimedia Upgrade retail package. Please post both Entry Form and Warranty card to Creative Pacific Pty Ltd. PO Box 835 Artarmon NSW 2064.

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Creative Product Purchased:

Serial No. of product

Retail Outlet purchased from:

Email Address:

CREATIVE
P•A•C•I•F•I•C

Terms and Conditions 1. Information on how to enter and the prizes form part of these conditions of entry 2. Entry is open to residents of Australia who purchase, in Australia, a retail version of any Creative Multimedia product that contains either the AWE 64 Gold or AWE 64 Value Sound Cards The "AWE 64 Win Gold" competition is not open to employees, their families, distributors or resellers. 3. The promotion period begins on November 1st, 1997 and ends on January 2nd 1998. 4. The purchase of products must occur within the promotion period. Entry forms will be available at the point of purchase. If, for any reason, forms are not available then they can be downloaded from the Creative Pacific Web Site at http://www.cppl.com.au. They will also appear in magazine advertising during the promotion period. All details on the entry form must be completed in order for the entry to be valid, including the inclusion of a completed warranty card. 5. There will be 3 weekly prizes consisting of a single gold coin for the duration of the competition. These cannot be transferred or redeemed for cash. The draws will take place at the offices of Creative Pacific Pty Ltd, 32-34 Dickson Ave, Artarmon, NSW 2064. The first 6 draws will take place each Monday commencing on Monday November 10th and concluding on Monday December 15th. Due to the Xmas holidays the last 3 draws will take place on Monday January 12th. All winners will be notified by mail as soon as possible after each draw. 6. The judges decisions will be final and no correspondence will be entered into. 7. The Promoter is Creative Pacific Pty Ltd of 32-34 Dickson Avenue, Artarmon, NSW 2064. ACN 057 221 075 . All Permit No Pending.

sidelines

Not content with their dominance of the PC games market, Intel have gone hard at the arcade scene. Forming the Intel Open Arcade Architecture Forum, the company has almost 80 game development companies in allegiance, such as Acclaim, Ubi Soft, Sega GameWorks and Microsoft. The Forum is keen to see the Pentium II CPU at the heart of future arcade machines. With the 3Dfx accelerator already making inroads, it all seems like natural progression, but we will wait and see whether or not it'll result in being able to buy arcade games in a box for $89.95.

Beam Cricket '97 ATE is $49.95, not $79.95 as we printed in the review in PCPP #17. How about that eh? Two new things you learnt today: we're not perfect and Cricket '97 ATE is a top buy!

Blood 2 is in the works. What can you expect? "Some of the most disgusting things I've ever seen", according to project leader James Wilson. Conceptual Artist Eric Kohler is hard at it designing scenes and environments that should give the OFLC some fun.

Cavedog have started making new units available online for Total Annihilation. As if 150 weren't enough... Go visit www.totalannihilation.com and get that value thing happening.

Production of Psygnosis' Formula 1 97 has been temporarily withheld as the company fights legal action from the sport's governing body. It seems Psygnosis used certain images and logos without permission. They're confident of an early resolution though. Not so for MicroProse's Grand Prix 2, who are facing a similar predicament. Production of the game has ceased forever as MicroProse have done as well as they want to from GP2. There are a huge run of great new driving games to fill the void though - look out next issue, it'll be packed with all the newies!

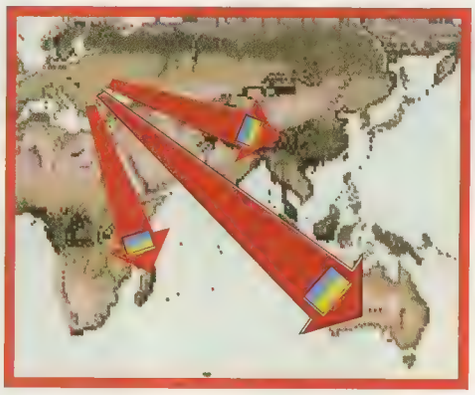
The Great Quake Mistake.

In Issue #18 we promised a whole pile of cool Quake mods on that issue's cover CD to compliment our feature article "Bakin' up some fresh Quakin'". Well, they weren't there. We're truly sorry about that. We know what it's like when you're promised some new fun and it doesn't happen the way you expected. The CD Editor responsible has applied the PowerPlay Birchwood of Penance and it's a dead set cert that you'll find the Quake mods on the next (#20) PowerPlay CD. Sorry!

Ukranian Invasion

The Ukrainians are coming! Now that the Cold War is over, the programmers previously kept from realising their full gaming potential are being let loose. Let loose where? Why, let loose right here in Australia, in fact. Adelaide, to be precise.

Megamedia, the American developer who have just released Chasm, are starting a new games development outfit right in the heart of the City of Churches. To get the ball rolling, Megamedia will be bringing in 17 Ukrainian programmers, designers and artists as the creative core of the new team. While this is great for the Ukrainians, it doesn't seem to be such a positive move for local talent. Megamedia though, are confident that local hiring will take place once the operation is up and running. Megamedia's Raaj Menon said that about 10 locals will be hired within the first 6 months.



Operations at the company, to be known as Megamedia (Aust) Pty Ltd, should be underway by Christmas. The team will be working on two projects: Submarine Titans and Ancient Conquest. The latter will be a 4 CD game and will be published by SSI worldwide. Unusually, they will release in two lots. The first two CDs will be released sometime in March 98. The first edition is called Ancient Conquest: Clash of the Argonauts and the second is Ancient Conquest: Straits of Hercules.

Menon stressed that the Adelaide house will be using cutting edge tools and will produce world-class games. All artists will be using 3D Studio MAX2, while Direct 3D and internet play are considered critically important.

Great news this. Another Australian game development company to go with the likes of Beam, Auran, Silver Lightning and Asylum. We have arrived.

Game School

Gather around and listen up gamers, for something wonderful has happened. Australia now has a professionally run course for prospective game designers.

The Academy of Interactive Entertainment is a venture between Micro Forte and the ACT Government through the Canberra Institute of Technology. Initially, a Certificate Level 4 in 3D Animation is being offered. Strong interest in the Certificate course has led to the institute developing an advanced Graduate Certificate in 3D Animation. While the focus is primarily of the Graduate course is computer games, the skills learnt have wide reaching applications. The course aims to achieve competency in the areas of character modelling and animation, special effects, rendered run-time movies for computers and TV as well as video post techniques.

Naturally enough, interest in the course is high and competition for places sadly fierce. The Institute is trying to grow the course to meet demand, but at this stage class sizes are around 6-12 students. Details for the 1998 Certificate Level 4 semester are as follows:

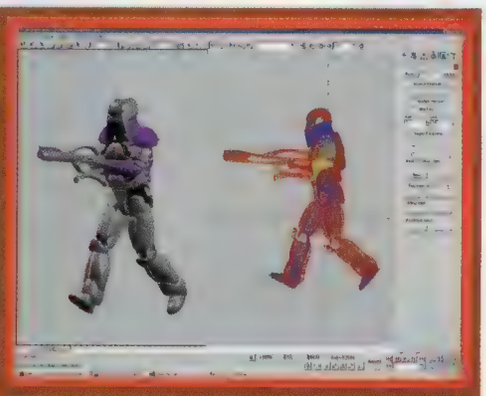
- **Semester 1 1998. 2nd February - 3rd June 1998**
- **Semester 2 1998 13th July - 11th December 1998**

The cost of the 22 week Level 4 course is $1960, while the planned fee for the Graduate Certificate is $3900.

Students will use Pentium Pro 200 machines with 3D Studio Max, Character Studio and a range of other professional development tools.

It's all too good to be true. With game development companies both starting up in Australia and coming in from O/S the scene is indeed looking rosy.

For more info contact Greg Wilden at the Canberra Institute of Technology, or visit the ... site @ www.cit.act.edu.au/aie





Auran used 3D Studio Max for Dark Reign, and many other major 3D artists do too, and maybe you...


Ubi Soft
http://www.ubisoft.com
F1 Racing
SIMULATION
Extreme realism
Thanks to cooperation with the Renault F1 Team
Original driver characteristics · Original cockpit configurations of
all the teams · Pit Lane Radio and FOCA TV highlights and information
Extreme racing for extreme fun
More than 30 options for tuning your ultimate Racing car · Set-up tutorial and
3 different skill levels for maximum exhilaration · Head to head battles
with the multiplayer option over a network or splitscreen
Real Time 3D graphics
for the total driving experience · Full 3D Pitstops
Realistic collisions!
AN OFFICIAL PRODUCT OF THE FIA™
FORMULA ONE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP*
M SCHUMACHER
FERRARI
FORMULA 1
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WINDOWS
CD-ROM PC
G
Metro
GAMES
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sidelines

In our special preview of Wing Commander: Prophecy in PCPP #17 we got very excited about the promised multiplayer features. Forget that. It seems Origin were being just a little optimistic about the capabilities of their development team. The game won't have any form of multiplayer support. Fantastic that. Good one Origin! Later next year they say they'll offer a patch incorporating multiplayer support, or alternatively, include it with an addon disc. We're betting on the latter, after all, why give something away free when you can charge for it, and even use it as an incentive to spend up for another bunch of missions?

Starcraft is coming to Blizzard's Battle.Net server - and nowhere else online. In a brassy move Blizzard has ruled out any possibility of their hugely anticipated game appearing on other onliner servers. Why? Because they can. The cost of running the servers is minimal and having Starcraft exclusively on Battle.Net will help along Blizzard's latest enhancement to the site: advertising. Meanwhile, the world waits, still, for any sign of the fabled game... Anywhere.

Uh oh... UO may be no go!



The Ultima Online beta test finished a day after the closure was announced, in late September. The final, ready for public consumption version was released a few days after that. If one thing was made very clear during the beta other than the fact that UO is the ultimate online experience (and a lot of fun), is that it has a long way to go. Buggy, imbalanced, and unstable. Stable enough for a fee paying public? Origin really had no choice in the matter. Ultima Online had to be released as the future of the project would be in doubt if Origin waited for UO to be a perfect product. Accompanying the release, is a rather stirring letter from Lord British explaining the rushed release. The monthly unlimited play fee is US$10, and this will go to start helping pay off the new servers and keep a fairly large team working on them to continue perfecting the game. Not a bad price, and worth it considering the pioneering experience Ultima Online.

So when you go to buy a copy, don't forget that it's not much different than the beta version at all. Hold on. No UO! Yes, we Australians of the lucky country can't get UO, and the future is uncertain. There's no local release scheduled as of yet, and EA are looking at a local set of servers. Cry foul murder! A local set of servers will give us smooth play, though we won't get to play people from around the world (a major drawcard for some players). More importantly, the official UO servers are having a hard time staying up in the US, with the UO development team still working around the clock to improve the thing. How's a licensed set of servers and staff going to baby sit the Aussie servers effectively?

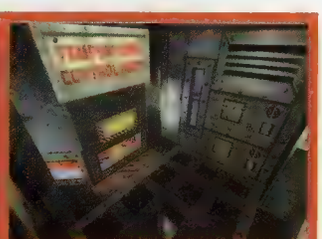
At this stage, EA are looking at all options, and one thing is for sure - they need feedback and support. So get out your virtual pens and email Origin at marketing@origin.ea.com demanding (in a polite way of course - we tried being extreme and pathetic and it doesn't work) you want Ultima Online and you want it now. Rayne Storm also has an awesome petition going online, so go there and sign it and make the word a better place. *http://www.bit.net.au/~darkpath/.*

Sin and beyond

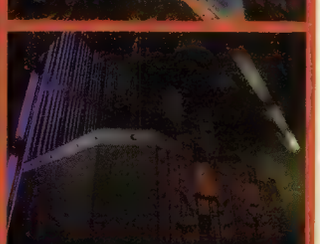
Ritual Entertainment's Sin is one of the half-dozen licensed Quake-engine games due out imminently. Check out the pics, the levels we played at E3 were pure brilliance and Sin looks to be one of the strongest single-player 1st-person shooters coming - not to mention its assured multiplay attractions.

Looking to the future, Ritual have already got their next project well underway and it's going to be a groundbreaker. Key to the project are two top level 3Dfx personnel, who Ritual poached to develop their new hardware acceleration technology.

Aiming for more natural looking surfaces, the new engine will rely on AGP and the Pentium II to get the job done. No pics yet, no name yet, but we're on the case.

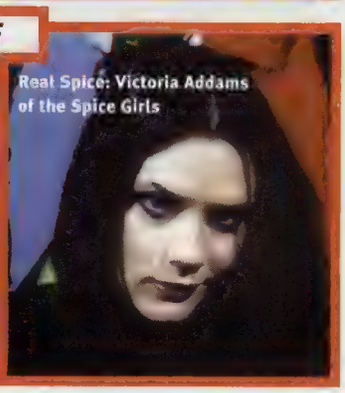






SPOT THE DIFFERENCE





TOP TEN GAMES

Rank TW	Rank LW	Title Developer / Distributor
1	-	**DARK REIGN** *Activision-Auran / Roadshow*
2	4	**JEDI KNIGHT: Dark Forces II** *LucasArts / Metro Games*
3	2	**TOTAL ANNIHILATION** *Cavedog / GT Interactive*
4	7	**MS FLIGHT SIM '98** *Microsoft / Microsoft*
5	3	**HEXEN II** *Raven - id software / Roadshow*
6	8	**STARFLEET ACADEMY** *Paramount / Electronic Arts*
7	5	**MOTO RACER** *Electronic Arts / Electronic Arts*
8	6	**DUNGEON KEEPER** *Bullfrog / Electronic Arts*
9	-	**AGE OF EMPIRES** *Microsoft / Various*
10	13	**LINKS LS '98** *Access / Sega Ozisoft*

Week ending 19th October

The ACER best selling charts are carefully compiled from a sample panel of retailers selected across Australia including mass merchants, department stores, specialty software stores and independent outlets. Retailers surveyed include Myer Grace Bros, David Jones and John Martins, K Mart, Target, Big W, World 4 Kids, Harvey Norman Computer Super stores, Blockbuster, Brashes, Video Games Heaven and Games Wizards ©1997

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Ph: 0352 241390 · Fx: 0352 241302 · Email: Siriuspub@onaustralia.com.au
or drop us a line at: PO Box 94 · Geelong 3220.

NEWS from the US by Steven Dale Greenlee

Anti-Gaming Bill BFG'd

A couple of months ago we told you about the effort of a U.S. Senator to pass a bill outlawing PC games on federal property and that the senator said such a law "could save the taxpayers millions of dollars recovered from lost productivity." However, Senator Faircloth was unaware of the real power gamers have when he included a provision in the Responsive Government Act to ban all games from Uncle Sam's computers. The provision did pass the Senate, but was stripped from the bill by the U.S. Congress.

Apparently, lawmakers were concerned that it might cost too much to: 1. Hire a boat load of computer people to travel from federal office to federal office stripping games off computers, and 2. Hiring gigabytes of inspectors to periodically view hard drives (oh my!) for gaming contraband.

Faircloth says this issue is not dead and that he will bring it back to the Congress after his committee holds hearings and studies the matter further. Even without the requirement, some U.S. departments are moving ahead with a "game-free" workplace. Both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Labor Department are working to cleanse their PCs of filthy games.

Federal gamers did grab their BFGs and began to fight back. The American Federation of Government Employees released a statement saying: "Government employees are hard-working and very much trying to get the job done. They don't sit around playing games all day. Senator Faircloth was off base even introducing this legislation." Stayed tuned to PC PowerPlay for more on this developing crisis in our special coverage called: Move Over Crack, PC Games: The New National Threat.

Microsoft: Where the Sun don't shine

Yes, we've all heard that Microsoft is battling with the U. S. Justice Department and that it may cost Bill Gates a million dollars a day in fines. So, he'll have to brown bag lunch... The real news is that Sun is suing Microsoft because Sun claims that Internet Explorer 4.0 does not support Java.

Sun invented Java and this programming language is the choice du jour for game designers, but it's alleged that Microsoft isn't supporting Java in its browser because it wants the programming world to use Microsoft Direct X. Also, Microsoft has increasingly been critical of Sun's Network Computer because, it seems, these devices will not need new Intel chips every thirty days or so and as the world knows, Intel's Andy Grove and Bill Gates are as close as...well...Mick Jagger and David Bowie. Currently, the only 100% enabled Java browser is Netscape, but if Microsoft bundles IE 4.0 with Windows 98 then Java might be squeegeed right out off the Internet. This Java fight could be bloodier than anything found in Redneck Rampage.

You Wanna Be a Game's Writer?

Have many times have we said it, "I could design a better game than (insert game of your choice here...mine is NightTrap)." Now you may have a chance to actually put your byte where your mouth is, that is, if you don't mind living in Canada.

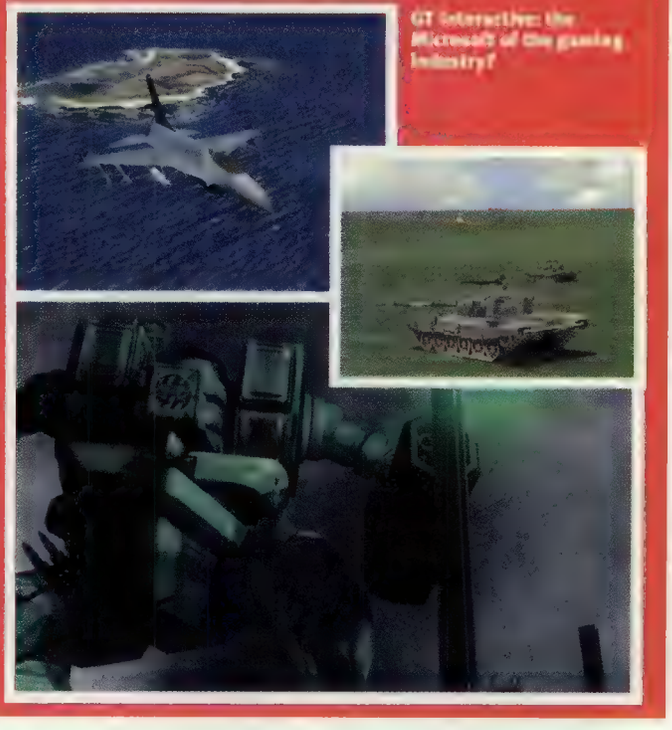
ECBI is a small private college in New Brunswick, Canada and will begin offering a two-year degree in computer game programming which will include game level design and making Artificial Intelligence sing (my word).

"There is a critical need for professional training in this industry," so Bethesda president Carl Weaver. Raven Software, Bioware and Ritual Entertainment have agreed to supply input on course study as well. Long time industry notable, Bill Kunkle is putting the coursework together and will be involved in other ways as well.

AOL in trouble again?

AOL has garnered its reputation for a good reason and the latest example is they are now fighting with Kesmai. Kesmai claims that since AOL has turned over gaming to the AOL subsidiary WorldPlay, that Kesmai participation has fallen off 90%. Kesmai CEO Chris Holden says AOL is burying Kesmai games and is in fact trying to run them out of business in order to capture a bigger share of the online gaming market.

GT: A Look Back



GT Interactive: the Microsoft of the gaming industry?

However, the Kesmai lawsuit goes even further claiming that AOL's merger with CompuServe would monopolize the gaming market and thus seeks an injunction prohibiting the much-ballyhooed bonding.

Kesmai's suit alleges trademark violations, unfair competition, and monopolistic practices under the terms of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Holden claims that AOL's actions are killing Kesmai as well as other unnamed online game providers.

Kesmai is owned by media mogul Robert Murdoch and his global News Corporation. "News Corporation, "says an AOL spokesman, "has a history of using litigation as a business tool to get what they couldn't get through negotiation. They're simply trying to improve their contractual position with AOL through bullying litigation."

Kesmai's contract with AOL is good through February 1999.

NEWS from the UK and EUROPE by Derek dela Fuente

Tech Talk - AGP

At present everyone is talking about 3D cards and AGP, if you take a look at Incoming from Rage you will see a game nigh on pixel perfect! I spoke to some developers about this:

Paul Finnigan - Rage Software

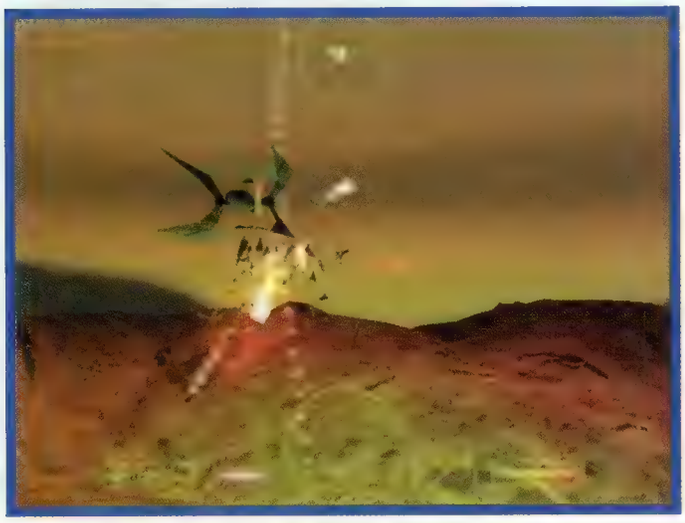
"There are an ever-growing number of 3D accelerator cards that are serious bits of kit, the cards with 3Dfx voodoo were immediate favourites of mine and an awful lot of the industry development community to boot! However, with the advent of AGP, the chips from nVIDIA and Intel are extremely cool. We will of course enable the majority of 3D accelerators through D3D, currently we have a minimum texture requirement that is prohibitive of cards which do not have a compression scheme or 4MB of memory - upgrade now everybody whilst you have the chance! We are also considering ports to native API's where we believe there to be a genuine advantage/frame rate speed gain, however I will state that the newer D3D drivers are a vast improvement over the 1st generation."

Peter Molyneux

"There is a revolution going on now. You have an AGP chipset. What that means is that where the graphics card now have all its onboard memory and a processor, the new AGP chip set means that you can now use memory on the main computer, so a card that now cost 400 dollars will come down to 40. The amount of graphics you can put on screen will be upped. This will become standard in 2 years time. What do you support? For even now the manufactures are talking about cards 10 times faster than we have now. DVD will be heaven but how many people will take it up! This will cause a revolution! CDs have always been crap anyway!"



3D acceleration - on to the next level with Incoming

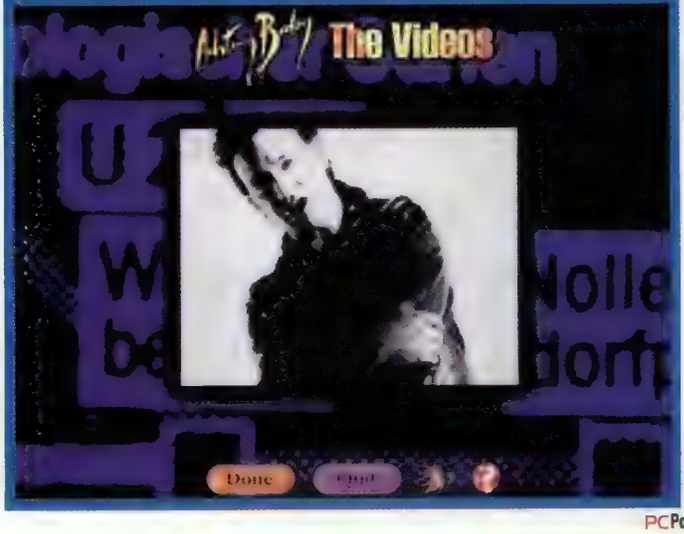


Rocking all over the world

The surprise hit of the year has been the interactive songbook from Europress: What's the Story morning Glory. Yep, that is the Oasis CD. We have had some really crappy interactive music programs but this features the real sound track from the CD and Oasis in Europe are BIG. If you are into music, into keyboard or guitar or like singing then this is the next best thing to playing along and learning. This is the first in the series and there are more to come: U2, Blur, INXS are set and apparently the bands have seen what they are up to and love the concept. Northstar the developers are speaking to everyone at the moment, and so Paul Weller, Cast, Jamiroquai, Cast, Del; Amitri, Thin Lizzy, Supergrass, Pulp, Ash, O.C.S., Radiohead, Charlatans are all be looked at. The interactive songbook from U2 is Achtung Baby, INXS is ten songs from the greatest hits album Blur is Parklife. They also plan to make the keyboard and guitar aspects even deeper and who know, we may even get the Spice Girls!







The only dog in our

60cm

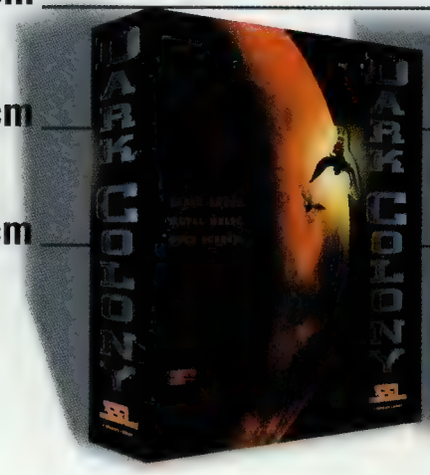
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40cm

30cm

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10cm



MA Restricted,15years & over,
High-level Animated Violence



Mature (15 Years and Over),
Low-level Animated Violence



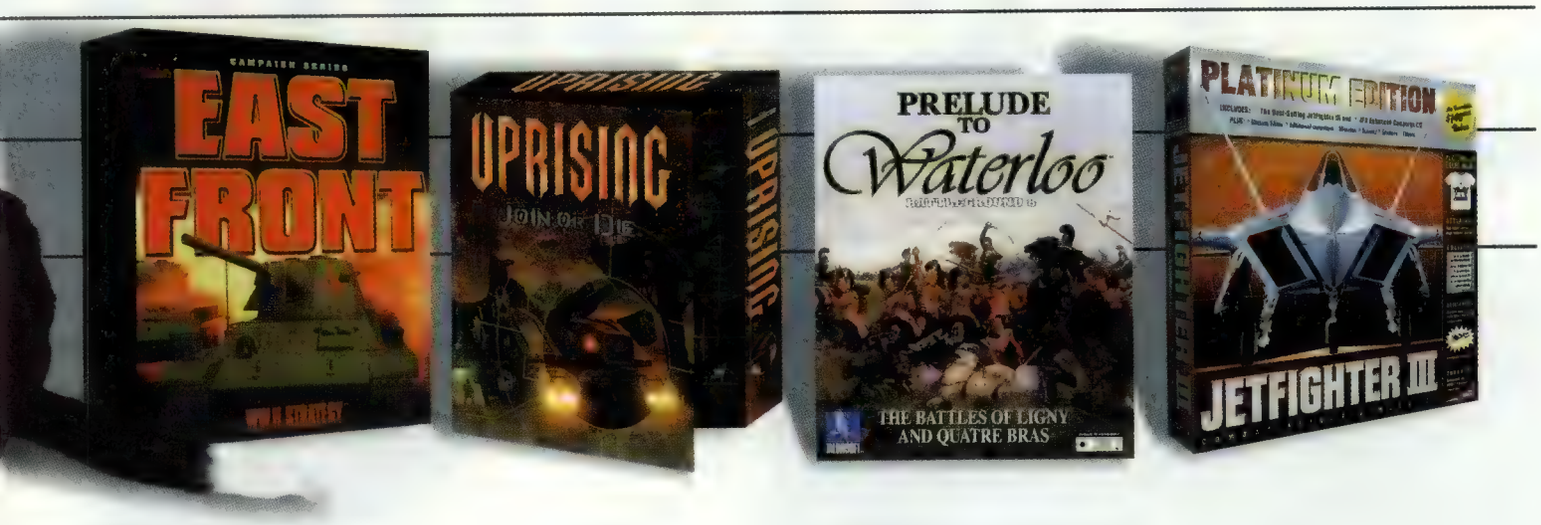
This title yet to be classified.



General, All Ages

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line up is Murphy!



This title yet to be classified.

Mature (15 Years and Over), Low-level Animated Violence

General (8 Years and over)

General, All Ages
Low-level Animated Violence

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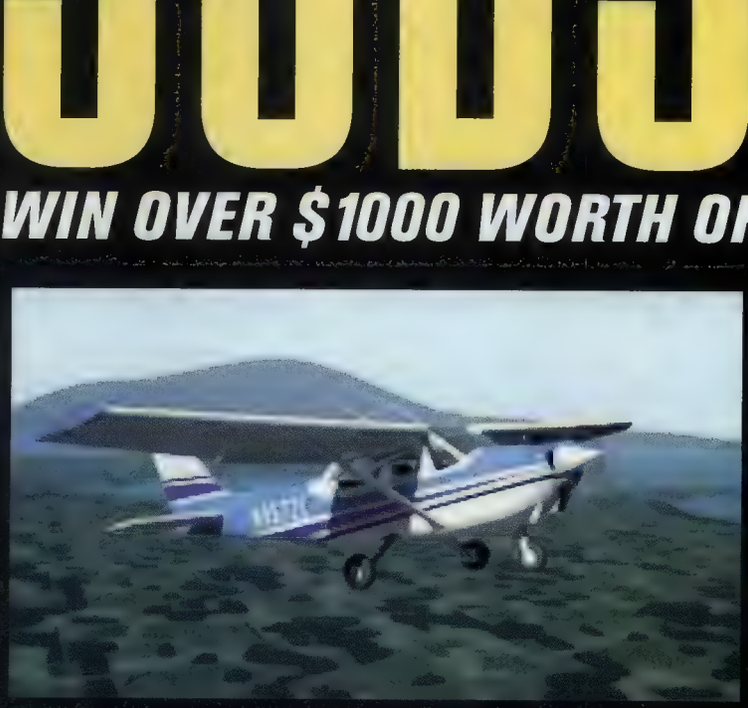
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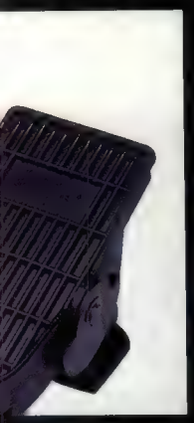
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Thrustmaster Millennium 3D joystick
Thrustmaster Rage 3D control pad
Thrustmaster Rudder Control System
Thrustmaster Attack Throttle
Sierra Pro Pilot

That's over **$1000** worth!

5 runners up will win a copy of Incubation from Blue Byte, check out the review for this brilliant game on page 70 if you need more motivation.

Issue #17 winners (Extreme Assault Thrustmaster & Maxi 3Dfx pack):
S Foster, Byron Bay NSW

Runners up:
R Allen, Aspley QLD
A Price, Traralgon VIC
D Crowe, Holden Hill SA
M Eden, Shepparton VIC

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BACK ISSUES

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#2 Kali net games, Earthsiege 2, Zork Nemesis, C&C playguide.

#3 3D graphic accelerators, Settlers 2, Cyberstorm, Zork Nemesis walkthrough.

#4 PC buyers guide, Australian Rugby League, Normality, Spycraft walkthrough.

#5 Net games, Time Commando, Close Combat, Civ 2 strategy guide.

#6 Best and worst games of all time, Quake, Pandora Directive, Flight sim roundup.

#7 Violence in games, Mechwarrior Mercenaries, Krush Kill 'n Destroy, MMX Pentiums

#8 Making of a Game, Video Card feature, C&C Red Alert, Privateer 2.

#9 Red Alert Feature, Alphaworld, Wavetable soundcards, Tomb Raider, Syndicate Wars.

#10 New Star Wars games, 3D accelerators compared, DIY Upgrade guide, Discworld 2

#11 Diablo, Interstate '76, MMX Pentiums examined, Build your own PC and network, Dark Reign.

#12 MDK, Quake Mission Packs, Huge joystick guide, Internet Newsgroups, Ecstatica 2.

#13 Need for Speed II, X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, Quake addons, PCs versus Consoles debate, Online game hackers.

#14 Dark Reign, Doom Clones, 16 Modems tested, Derek Smart, Comanche 3, Redneck Rampage.

#15 Carmageddon, E3 Report, Tomb Raider 2 preview, Blood & Sex, Twinsen's Odyssey

#16 Dungeon Keeper, RPG feature, Lands of Lore II preview, Virtual Reality, Last Express playguide

#17 Age of Empires, 500MHz Pentiums, Starfleet Academy, Beam Software, Software Piracy

#18 Jedi Knight, Total Annihilation, Hexen II, Quake addon megaguide

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$15,000 worth of prizes!

THE ULT... CHRISTMA...

There's never been a competition like it. Thanks to a bit of legwork from us and the generosity of the companies whose products appear on these pages, we have the best competition ever run in a games mag.

***SIX** hampers to WIN! In **EACH** hamper is $2,500 worth of golden gaming goodness.*

You've got until December 24th 1997 to get your entries in. That's when we'll be drawing the SIX incredibly lucky winners. Just write the answer to the following question on the back of an envelope and send it to:

PC PowerPlay
ULTIMATE Christmas Hamper
78 Renwick St
Redfern
NSW 2016

Q. What 2 older games made a cameo appearance in the secret levels of Doom2?





Jazz J-100 3D speakers

From Walk on Water, worth $85.

Give up on those cheap 'n' useless jobs that came free with your "multimedia" system and get seriously amplified. The J-100's are fully-featured and offer top performance in a compact size.

MicroProse games

1 x Dark Earth, worth $89.95
1 x Worms 2, worth $79.95
1 x 7th Legion, worth $79.95



Great games to keep you busy over Xmas from the masters. 7Th Legion is a fast paced futuristic strategy game, Dark Earth is an extreme adventure game offering a unique mix of real time combat and action, and Worms 2 has 60 new weapons to create havoc and mayhem with.

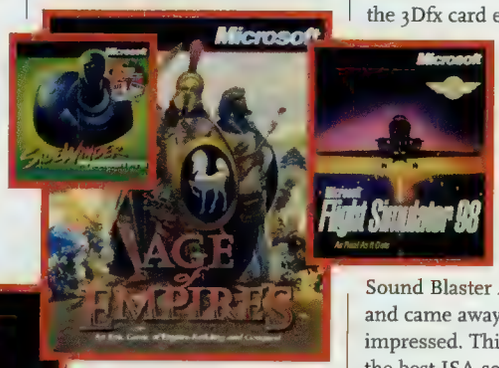
Levis game and gear

1 x game
2 x Levis T-Shirt worth $39.95



Guess what? Levis, the jeans people have a game! Strange but true. It's a quick and fun, non-epic sort of adventure. Win one and 2 T-shirts.

Microsoft games & joystick



1 x Sidewinder Precision Pro joystick, worth $129.
1 x Age of Empires, worth $89.
1 x Flight Sim 98, worth $89.

Top prize pack this. The Sidewinder is a good all-round stick and Age of Empires, well, we love it! When you've had it with global conquest take to the skies in Flight Sim 98.

Virtual Encounter

Screensaver, worth $49.

From Mind Flux, this highly funky screensaver/nice thing to look at features over 30 minutes of spectacular 3D animation adventures.



Creative Pacific sound and video cards

1 x Canopus Pure 3D video accelerator, worth $379
1 x Creative AWE 65 Gold sound card, worth $399

Oh yes. Bring your PC's multimedia capabilities alive with these truly fantastic products from Creative. The Pure 3D is the 3Dfx card everybody wants. It's got 4Mb of texture RAM you see, which is twice as much as all the rest. Very hot, very desirable.

We benchtested the Sound Blaster AWE 64 Gold and came away highly impressed. This is comfortably the best ISA sound card around. The effect it'll have on your gaming is huge. Bring 'em alive!



Virgin games & cool stuff

1 x Blade Runner, worth $89.95
1 x Ignition Party Pack, worth $250.

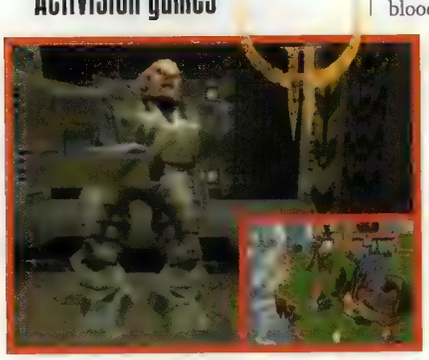
Well here's most of your spare time for the next few weeks taken care of. Blade

LTIMATE
S HAMPER



Runner, as you can see from our review on p. 56 is a winner. Brilliant, beautiful and, well, Blade Runner. Ignition is the funnest 3D driving game around - especially in multiplay, which Virgin know, so the Party pack contains 2 copies for head-to-head action, as well as posters and a Hot Wheels car! Sensational!

Activision games



1 x Quake 2, worth $99.95
1 x Netstorm, worth $89.95

Two of their hottest games around. Quake 2 is a stunner. Enhanced 3D graphics, amazing new weapons and enemies and a whole lot less brown. Good eh? Netstorm is a brilliant Real Time Strategy game. And fast. Very, very fast. Great single play too, don't be misled by the name!

Dataflow games Logitech joystick

1 x Wingman Warrior, worth $129.
1 x You Don't Know Jack: Movies, worth $49.



A hell of a nice stick, is the Wingman Warrior. Ergonomic handle design and full 6-button + hat support. Perfect for fast action games and hardcore sims alike.

Just in case you didn't know, the YDKJ series of quiz games are bloody funny and really, really cool. Anyone doubting a quiz game could be so good should immediately rush out and try it to prove yourself wrong. The Movies edition will test even the most confident movie buff.

Hilad games

1 x Carmaggeddon, worth $89.95
1 x Chasm, worth $79.95

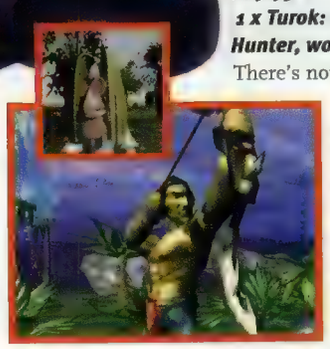
Carmaggeddon is a game of peace, love, harmony and dismemberment. Take to the road and go pedestrian mashing. Great fun, but remember kids, it's just a game...

From the Ukraine (see news story) comes this attractive 1st-person shooter. Shoot the arms and legs of enemies and watch them fall down! More tasteful fun from Hilad.

Roadshow games

1 x Constructor, worth $89.95
1 x Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, worth $89.95

There's nothing quite like Constructor. Build a town, like all the rest of the sim-sims out there, but then deal with the everyday grief of the residents! Boy are they easily upset. A classic.

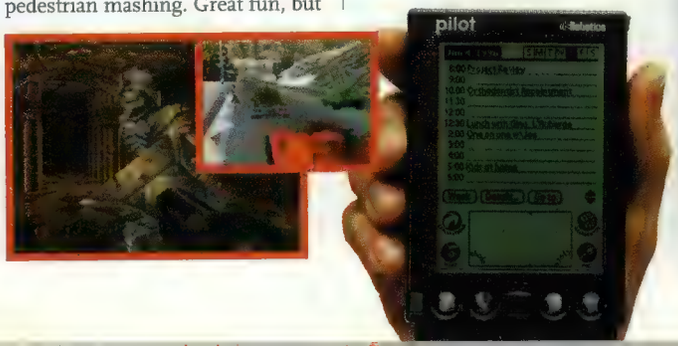


Turok looks and plays brilliantly. So well, in fact,

3Com electronics

Pilot 1000 Personal Organiser, worth $349.

Knowing where, when and with whom you're supposed to be these hectic days is a toughie, or at least it is for this mag's editor... What better way to keep tabs on yourself than the Pilot 1000 personal organiser! This miracle of miniaturisation has all the features you'd want. It doesn't play games though... But hey, can't spend all your time playing!



Issue # 17 winners: Lucky bustards

STAR FLEET ACADEMY
K Khan, Evans Head NSW
M Eather Gerandton NSW
D Grady Belmore NSW
N Gryga Churchill QLD
J Richardson Riverside TAS
S Lawrence Mullaloo WA

CONSTUCTOR
N Davies Thorton NSW
S Dowman Ratha QLD
A Weir Glengowrie SA
D Lawrence Mullaloo WA
K Heyer Toowoomba QLD
R Gully Adelaide SA

CRICKET 97 ASHES
M Harris Trevallyn TAS
G Young Eastseaham NSW
J Ryne Guildford NSW
R Bevan Orange NSW
N Driver Eight mile plains QLD
B Perkins Greenock SA

AGE OF EMPIRES
B Smith Melbourne VIC
L Crowley Rochedale QLD
B Jennion Verrindale QLD
W Brook Hunters Hill NSW
B Martin Tusmore SA
K Beavis Melton South VIC
G Merkel Somerville VIC
K Mcnally Lane core NSW
M Nicoski Hawthorn WA
V Olbromski Springfield NSW

WHERE DO GAMES COME FROM?

Games industry workers in profile, part 2.

by Brenda Garneau



THE ANIMATOR: DIMITRI JOANNIDES

In your real world, you catch yourself sketching pictures of dragons and wizards. You draw commandos on the office letterhead while the boss isn't paying attention. You love to watch movies like Jurassic Park, and you stare at everything ILM (Industrial Light & Magic) does with a reverence usually reserved for a super model. You think, "Wouldn't it be cool to be an animator?"

Indeed it would be, and the demand is so high for talented animators that there has yet to be enough supply despite the spiralling salaries offered. Apart from animators, openings exist for 3D modellers, 2D artists, level and creature designers and others. As the software industry grows and Hollywood continues to embrace animation and special effects, the opportunities are virtually limitless.

Say hi to Dimitri

One of the more colourful figures in the industry, Dimitri Joannides, a full-time animator and part-time Elvis impersonator and musician, began his animation career six years ago, when personal computing power was just cresting the animation ridge and barely able to run more complex scenes. Throughout his career, he's done virtually everything, from classical animation for Universal Studios to 2D modelling of a giant database of game items to determining the overall look and feel of an entire software release.

In PC PowerPlay's continuing behind-the-scenes series, Dimitri talks about how he got into the business, how to tell if you're animator material and offers suggestions to anyone hoping to make the jump from pencil and paper to pixel and screen.

The Animator speaketh

PCPP: Did you start off as an animator?

DJ: No. Actually, I was nicknamed the "2D guy," but my strengths on paper quickly translated to items, "flic" editing, design and then, ultimately, animation. Although it was a real steep learning curve at first, the computer is nothing more than a tool. I don't care what fancy, high-tech gear comes out, it's still the artist's job to create, invent and relay a feeling. So, once I learned the system, it was a matter of applying the basic principles of art and animation to my work.

PCPP: You used to do a lot of "classical" animation. What's the biggest difference between classical and computer animation?

DJ: There's more than just one difference between the two. For instance, when I first entered the computer industry, I was surprised at how few people used drawing on paper as a tool for designing and storyboarding an idea. If they did, it seemed to be their weakest area, but to me, it's tremendously useful. Drawing things out first, I end up saving lots of time and producing better stuff in the end. Another big difference is the actual animation. You know, I was amazed, and that's an understatement, at how much the computer did for you. If someone has real artistic talent, they'll be a head up on at least 10% of the people who are already working in the industry. The computer has so many flashy effects with cool lighting and camera moves that you could easily fool non-animators to believe that an animation was great.

The reality is that computer does most of the work, and when you put real artistic talent behind something, be that a two-second flic or a two-minute game intro, the difference really, really shows. For instance, on paper, if the scene requires a character to react to something at a specific angle, you actually have to work out that angle and draw the right perspective. On the computer, once the character is built, you can build a camera and view the character from any angle with ease. While the computer does a lot of the work, I've found that many studios request basic line test animations when you apply, so there's really no hiding your abilities with paper and pencil. Another big difference is that you can pretty much do an entire animation with lighting, color, textures and effects in 3D.

PCPP: Artists out there now, Dimitri, that have solid talent, might be worried that they won't be able to convey with a keyboard and a mouse what they can with a pencil or a paintbrush. Did you find that the computer environment or the tools were a hindrance to your creativity?

DJ: I found the classical environment to be a lot more relaxed and creative, and, yeah, I



A collage of different characters





Key poses for Universal Studios' animated cartoon, Monster Force

The Stats

Age:	25
Company:	Sirtech Software
Where before:	Universal Studios
Current Project:	Wizardry VIII, Lead Artist
Recent Projects:	Wizardry: Nemesis, Jagged Alliance II Interface work
Yrs in Industry:	Gaming industry - 3 years Art industry - 7 years
Training:	Learned to draw at a very young age and have been doing it ever since. School training 1.5 years at Cite Collegial and 1.25 years in Animation at Algonquin College.
Average week:	39 hours, five days a week.
During crunch:	50 hours, six days a week.
Your job motto:	I am the Teflon Man.

The Money

According to the Software Publishers Association's 1996 Salary Survey, the average salary is:
Artist: US $36,400
The SPA did not have figures for Animators or Lead Artists, and Dimitri wasn't talking.
In Australia, despite our limited local development industry a solid salary structure is in place. To start, as a trainee, the average wage in Oz is $20,000. As people become more experienced, the average wage is $25,000 - $30,000. Project leaders and managers can expect to earn anywhere between $30,000 and $50,000. However, some companies also have a profit share scheme in place which means these wages can increase, depending on the success of the organisation's products.

The Mind

It takes more than Microsoft Paintbrush and a lens flare to be an animator today. The industry's top artists have knowledge of all the following software and techniques:
1. 3D Studio Max
2. 3D Studio Release 4.0.
3. Adobe Photoshop
Nice if you can get it, the software and hardware below is out of reach of most want-to-be's, but if you can get your hands on this technology or take a course that uses it, so much the better:
1. Lightwave
2. Soft Image
3. Alias Wavefront
4. SGI Machines
In addition, Dimitri suggests getting experience in the following software packages:
1. Fractal Painter
2. 4D Paint. Allows you to paint directly on a 3D mesh. It's a very popular tool nowadays as polygonal creatures become more integrated in games. In harmony with software like Photoshop, it's invaluable for today's 2D Artists.
3. Animator Pro. A DOS program, it's slowly becoming outdated, but nothing Windows-based has come close to its power.
4. Paint Shop Pro. A great program for converting image modes.
5. Adobe Premiere. A great flic editor. A basic knowledge of 3D software would be a great idea for understanding things like mapping and how textures are applied so depending on what software the company is using in particular.

think that has a lot to do with the technology. Let's face it, animation software and the gaming industry are growing and changing by the minute. Competition and demand are always very apparent and crucial, so this causes the artists to be far more competitive in the work place. Now, keep in mind I am generalizing.



There are exceptions to the rule depending on who you work with. As far as the creativity goes? At first, of course, if you've never worked with a computer, it's going to be strange, and you're going to have to learn the software and get comfortable in the environment. Once you get there, I think you'll find your creativity returns quickly. Like I said, the computer is only a tool, and apart from it crashing occasionally and eating everything you've worked on for the last hour, it doesn't really inhibit my creativity any. In fact, when it crashes, my words are typically very creative. [Laughs]

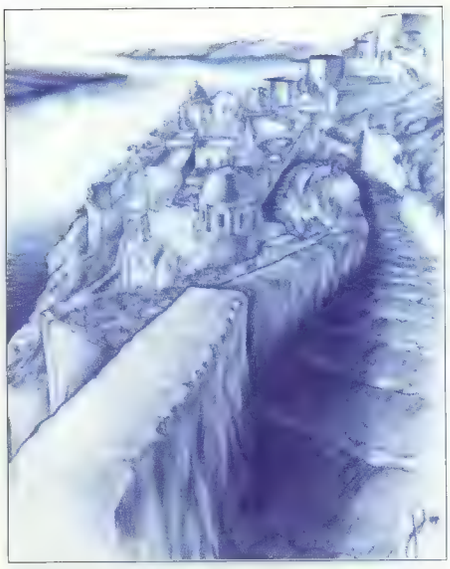
PCPP: What opportunities are there right now for people who are interested in becoming an animator?

DJ: There are a lot. Probably the best place to start is as a 2D artist. The work involves little or no 3D or animation, but it gives you a lot of the background you'll need, and I think it's easiest for a traditional artist to move from paper to computer in 2D. It involves anything from items to textures for levels to creatures, which is a growing demand now that real-time 3D levels and polygon creatures are becoming standard.

There are also opportunities in 3D modelling which involves meshing out creatures, NPCs [non-player characters], items and furniture among other things. As a modeller, you actually "build" the 3D images that are used in the cinematics or in the game world itself.

I think the market is opening up quite a bit for sculptors, too. They are being used much more often now, especially in movies. First, an actual sculpture is made, and then it's scanned. The results are awesome. In fact, the modeller I'm presently working with is in an ideal position. He has both sculpting and computer modelling experience.

What most people want to be, however, is an animator, and they are always in demand. Always. When you're an animator, it's more



Performance Artist? Dimitri as Elvis. He's actually won awards doing this. "I do it because it's a lot of fun," he says, "not because I'm obsessed"

than just being able to take a mesh and throw it in a scene. You have to work through it, make its walk look real, make sure the body reactions and movement looks real. If anything happens in the background, from a tree limb saying to a bird flying by, you have to animate that frame by frame so it looks real. A good animator, the best animators, are those whose work is so real, natural and seamless that it often goes by unnoticed. The more real something looks, the less likely anyone is to comment negatively on it. Although software has recently come out which can animate walks, jumps, or a "flip cycle" by simply plopping in some footsteps, creative animators are always in great demand because the results are always superior.

A word of advice, though, be prepared to deal with limited and repetitive frame animation and palettes, unless you're working strictly with cinematics.

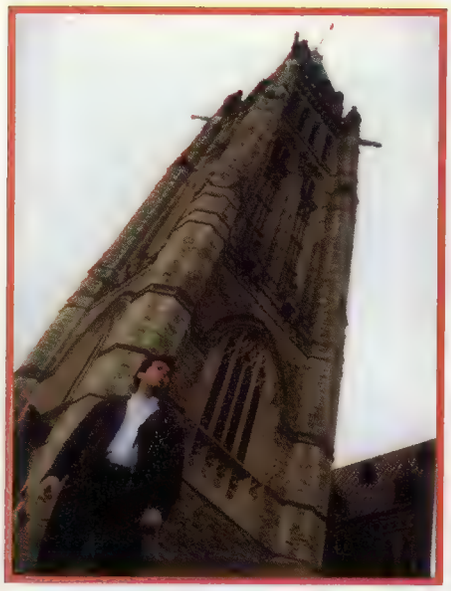
Last but not least is the designer, probably the toughest position, but also the one in the biggest demand. As the art designer of a project, you'll determine it's look and feel and establish the most important aspects of the art involved in the game. Everything you take for granted on a screen is probably the result of an art designer, the interface, the way the creatures look, the look of the levels. It's challenging, and you can prepare to give up your social life for it. [Laughs] Design tends to follow you even when you're not working. You think about it all the time.

All of these jobs, really, are highly creative and everyone's contribution is critical to the product. Sounds kind of lofty, I guess, but you know, each of these jobs uses skills that aren't part of some microchip on a motherboard. It's a process that comes from within the artist himself.

PCPP: You must see tons of resumes. What's the best way to break into the industry, Dimitri? What does someone need in order to get through the front door?



DJ: Little question with a big answer. Hmm. Most

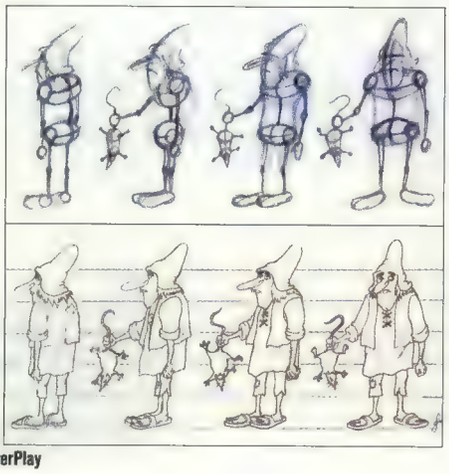




Evolution of a fantasy portrait from concept sketch to final colourization. Dimitri works with a team of artists to produce the final product

obviously and importantly, they need the raw talent, and they need to develop it. I've seen a lot of people enter this business, both in school and in the workplace, who aren't really good artists, and in most cases they met a lot of heartaches. Acknowledging early on what you're good at and where your interests lie and then melding those together is key. Also, know your limitations. It's a very competitive and enticing business, and some people try to come in without really taking a hard look at their talents or researching the industry. They get discouraged. I mean, just because your friends think you can draw well doesn't mean you're the calibre the industry is looking for. If you want an honest appraisal of your work, don't show it to your friend, take it to a college art department or, if you're near one, a real animation studio. They'll tell you, and you'll save yourself that heartache.

Next is education, especially today with computers playing such a big role in the business. Education is more important than ever. It used to be you could be naturally gifted with a great portfolio, and you'd succeed in the business, and in some cases you still can. Now, though, it's not just a question of learning how to animate, a big thing in itself, it's learning how to animate on a computer. So, you've got two big things right there.



There are schools that can teach you what you need to know. School offers some other great advantages like connections. Being around fellow animation students and teachers exposed me to great contacts in the city and beyond, and just being around them, I would learn. Art is visual, you know, and just watching someone more experienced than I was working away would teach me something. There was an artist in particular that I found myself going to see a lot. He had a comic book background at Marvel, and he was definitely my guru. A word of advice, too, be sure to research who your teacher will be and his or her background. One teacher of mine was great on the computer but terrible on paper. So, since that was my strength, it was difficult to learn from him. On the other hand, I once worked for a great art director who would give me revisions, but would put a second drawing in red on top of mine to show me where I went wrong.

We actually get a resume every now and again from someone willing to work for free just to get their foot in the door

What else? Practice a very important part of success. It's something you just can't stop doing, although once you're in the industry, your daily work will be more than enough to satisfy that. But art, like many things, is truly based on that "practice makes perfect" or at least "good" motto. A great place to improve your skills on paper is with classical animation. I can't remember when I ever drew so much. I have tons of drawings from Universal Studios that I often look through. It's really neat to see how much you can improve in a short time when you've got that kind of volume.

PCPP: How about experience, Dimitri? You know those advertisements that say, "You must have previous experience".

DJ: I know, I know they don't have it, how to get it? For me, any chance that I was able to get hands-on experience, I went for it whether or not I was paid. It truly is the most valuable thing you can do to insure your success. When I first entered the computer industry, in fact, I didn't have a lot of knowledge about 3D animation or computers. So, I left my classical animation job which paid pretty well, and worked for free for 3 months just to get the training and to get my foot in the door.

You can look at it many ways. Yeah, I worked for free, but I also trained on someone else's expensive hardware and software for free. We actually get a resume every now and again from someone willing to work for free just to get their foot in the door.

PCPP: Does it work?

DJ: Did for me. [Laughs]

PCPP: So, they get their feet in the door. What are some of the biggest challenges they can expect to face?

DJ: Well, one of the biggest challenges of my job is trying to be creative given the restrictions I have to work with, palettes, pixels, limited animation frames or polygons, etc. As an artist, it's normal to want to put as much art and creativity into your work as you possibly can, but very often, it's a matter of taking bits and pieces of that grandiose vision and incorporating them into something that works within the restrictions of the project.

Other challenges lie in the industry itself. It's very temperamental- whatever's hot one minute may not be the next, and technology dictates what people want and can afford, 3DFX cards, faster computers and the like.

PP: And on the flip side?

DJ: You mean the good things? Hmm. The biggest reward without question is seeing the game come together from drawn designs to a rendered, functioning game with sounds, dialogue, screens and the animation, all of it together. When the product is successful, whether it's a cartoon or a computer game, you know that people around the world will be entertaining themselves with it for hours. Hopefully, all that hard work and attention to detail will be appreciated.



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Tel: (02) 385 0888 Fax: (02) 385 0706
Contact Person: John Hughes
Email: John.Hughes@unsw.edu.au
Home Page:
http://www.hepworth.cfa.unsw.edu.au

The Queensland College of Art, Griffith University
Tel: (07) 875 3112 Fax: (07) 875 3199
Contact Person: John Eyley, Kevin Roper, Patricia McGregor
Home Page:
http://www.gu.edu.au/gwis/qca/qca_home.html

Victoria College of the Arts
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If you've only experienced QUAKE in single player mode you haven't really played it at all!



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Quake II: the public beta test

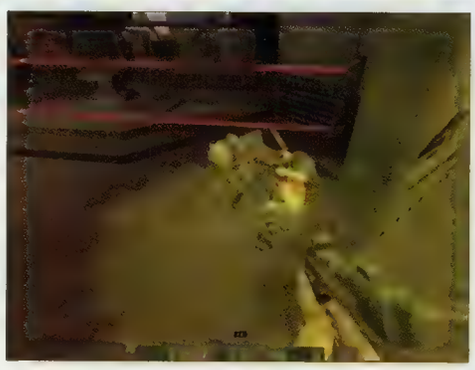
It was a morning like any other in my life of being a computer junkie. Before heading out into the world of sunlight and normal people, a quick check of my E-mail was on the agenda. The word was out, and it was good. The Quake 2 demo was released. Springing into action, I quickly went to Id Software's Web site and started the download... it was happening, it was finally time to play the most eagerly awaited game of this year.



It's beautiful...

You are going to want a 3D card for Quake 2. It's that simple. Watching a laser shot light up a corridor in reds and greens coupled with the smooth texturing is a stunner. Without acceleration you still get cool effects like wounds appearing on monsters and flies swarming over dead bodies, but a 3Dfx or equivalent OpenGL 3D accelerator is a must if you want to play this game as it was intended. The Quake 2 engine now showcases transparent glass and water, larger emphasis on multi-floored rooms and finally a goodbye to that crap brown only colour scheme that Quake seemed obsessed with. Definitely a more interesting environment than first time around.





It's here! It's here! It's...almost here anyway. But it still looks bloody good!

It's smart!

One of the criticisms of Quake was the dumb behaviour of monsters. They had limited patrol areas and felt too scripted to give any sense of surprise. Their Quake 2 brethren are a different story. You no longer feel safe standing around as the beasties roam about to a much larger extent, and once they get a visual lock on you, the chase is on. The sneaky devils will duck and sidestep your shots as well, all making for a more realistic shoot out. The monsters themselves, apart from the obligatory grunts, look menacing with a more sci-fi feel than the gothic nature of Quake's denizens. Although the mechanical dog creature with the poisonous super stretch tongue defies categorization.

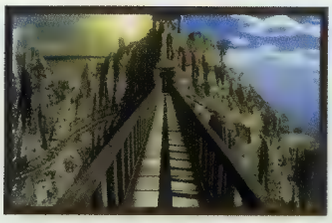
Like the QTest file released before Quake, this demo of Quake 2 is a test release that is aimed at making sure the game will run properly on the huge array of PC configurations that exist out there. The Id team stress that final judgments cannot be made on this demo as things such as sound effects, monster animations and general tweaking haven't been completed yet. Even in uncompleted form it looks like Quake 2 will transform the Christmas of '97 into the season to kick some serious ass.

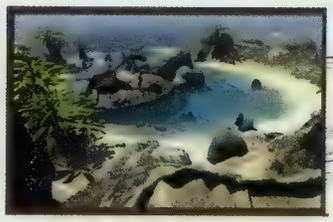
Peter Sharpe

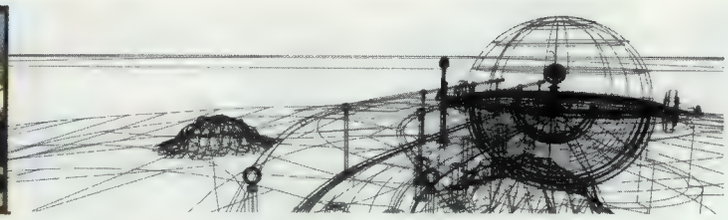
Why isn't it on the demo CD????

We really tried. Because this isn't the official demo iD would not give PowerPlay permission to use it on the cover CD. A demo should be out in time for the January CD though, so hang in there non-netters and if you see it on any other mag CD raise hell!


IF IT'S IN THE GAME,
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THE MILLER BROTHERS

CREATORS OF MYST & RIVEN

How do you approach creating a sequel to the biggest selling game of all time? Do you shoot for bigger than Ben Hur? Do you pour the massive profits into exploring bizarre quirks and spin offs, and does the project fall apart under the sheer weight of what has been undertaken? That was a problem that could have affected The Sequel, had it not been for three guys not compromising their creative integrity. Take note all you foul behemoths that take a formula and churn out second rate titles for us to despise, for there is a formula for success. A real deep down passion for creating a beautiful gaming experience. On the eve of Riven's release, PC PowerPlay's March Stepnik spoke to the brothers Rand and Robyn Miller, and Richard Vander Wende - the creators and driving force behind Riven. One thing's for sure, Riven is something they're very proud of.

Do you see Riven as getting the opportunity to make the Myst you wanted to?

Rand: That's part of it. What we didn't want was just a sequel. We were excited about having the opportunity to do something better. To take what we got and what we learned out of Myst, and also the resources that Myst provided us, and doing kind of a worthy successor, doing something that stood on its own. And in fact was maybe more of the primary element in the whole series.

How did you go about creating a sequel to the biggest selling game ever?

Robyn: It was really difficult to make our decisions on Riven, based on the success of Myst. That's something we could have ended up doing, and I think we purposely tried to stay away from that. It was important to us to feel like we were making decisions based on what we thought would be good, rather than what we thought would make a more successful product. More than anything we pushed on Riven - was that we just wanted to make something good, we wanted to make a story that people would be interested in, we wanted to make a world that people would find believable and would be also very interested in. As soon as a creative person starts thinking about making something that's going to top the last project, you can start to get carried away with that, you can start to get focused on your last project, instead of the current goal.

What about all the drivel out there currently. With every top quality game out there, there seems to be ten horrible ones.

Robyn: I think it's a problem, but not just in the gaming industry. I think it's a problem in a lot of industries. People naturally look at what ever else is success and then try to copy it. If anything we wanted to make something that was original - stood alone on its own merits, rather than mimicking our previous effort.

Was it technology that allowed that?

Robyn: It was technology to a certain extent that allowed it, but it was also just coming at it creatively from a different standpoint. We had a lot more people on the team this time, we had a lot more input and we had learned a lot when we were making Myst. What makes a movie great is not necessarily the technology or special effects, what makes a movie great are the ideas behind it. I think if anything Riven could have been made with a lot less technology and still have been enjoyable, because we put a lot of effort into the ideas.



(l to r) Rand, Richard & Robyn

"As soon as a creative person starts thinking about making something that's going to top the last project, you can start to get carried away with that, you can start to get focused on your last project, instead of the current goal."

What do you see as the major difference then between the two?

Robyn: From our point of view what we were trying to do was provide the same experience that people had with Myst, although Riven gave us the chance to take a more purposeful approach to it from the very beginning, to look back and try and figure out why we would design things a certain way, make sure everything about it supported to story and supported that element that everything was there for a reason. Off the bat, first thing people will notice, is that visually there is a change. Myst was not quite as realistic as Riven is. In addition to that is there is design change in the visuals that people will recognise that this is a different world that Myst. We made an effort to put more story into Riven, to make the characters deeper and broader. And we made an effort to make Riven a much more interesting and believable place in every aspect - whether it be sound, visuals, or story. There's nothing technically that stands out between the two though. Myst's strength was that it was that it was interesting place or world. It was a new way to play - but it was a creative difference, not technologically.

What excited you making Riven?

Rich: It's really about making a world for us - making a believable place. A place that's going to be interesting and fun and challenging for people to explore. This time we had better tools with which to produce the graphics, and because of the better software and hardware we were going to be able to get more detail right off - that's what excited us. We tried to push, refine and make the creative aspect of the graphics, story and characters more sophisticated. That simple idea of making a place that you yourself would want to go to and spend your time. That's what drove us.

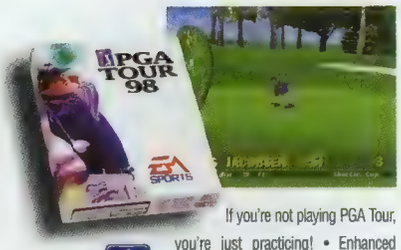


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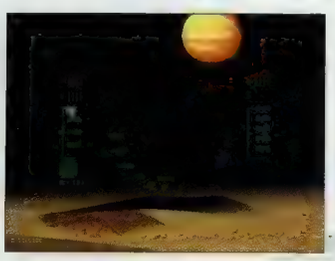
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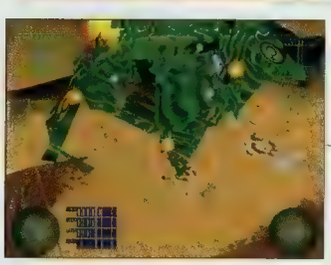
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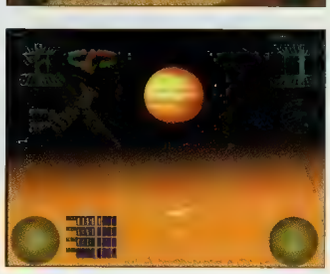
Xenocracy

Shape of things to come

Derek dela Fuente









Category	Space trader sim
Players	1
Publisher	Simis/Grolier
Available	February 98

The world needs more space simulation/arcade games. Xenocracy, from the initial screen shots I saw, looks stunning and coming from the renowned development team Simis who have an impressive track record, it certainly looked like it could be something special. I made my way to the their palatial office in search of an exciting game and I wasn't disappointed!

PCPP: You have a proven track record with some excellent flight sim games, have you used your experience with planes, flight models, etc. to give everyone a similar authentic experience in space, and would you say the structure of the missions work much in the same way as they would on a flight sim?

[Ian Baverstock] As far as the experience with planes and flight models goes we have got a lot of invaluable experience with very real maths and physics rather than with the models. We certainly have not taken a flight model and modified it to use as the space control mechanism but we have used real maths and physics in the way we have to write a flight sim to do some very accurate modelling, so it has a very accurate simulation having chosen appropriate flight models for a space game as opposed to a flight sim. The driver has to be fun but having made it fun we want it to feel as real as possible.

As far as the missions working in the same way as those on a flight sim, you structure the missions for the essence of the game. We wanted a lot of flexibility with the missions in Xenocracy. In effect there is a similarity with flight sim missions but here they are much more edited towards the game!

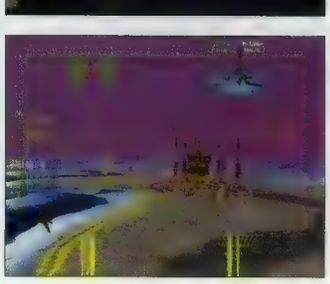
PCPP: What percentage of the game is action/combat and pure sim/management?

[Tony Francis] The game is intended to be roughly 80% - 20% combat to strategy. The player will spend most of their time playing missions, flying around, fighting and generally blowing things up. The strategic engine is well placed in the game to give a framework to generate the missions. The strategy side is a facet within itself but you are focused most of the time on flying and fighting.

You certainly can't win the game merely by fighting though, you must involve yourself in the strategic side!

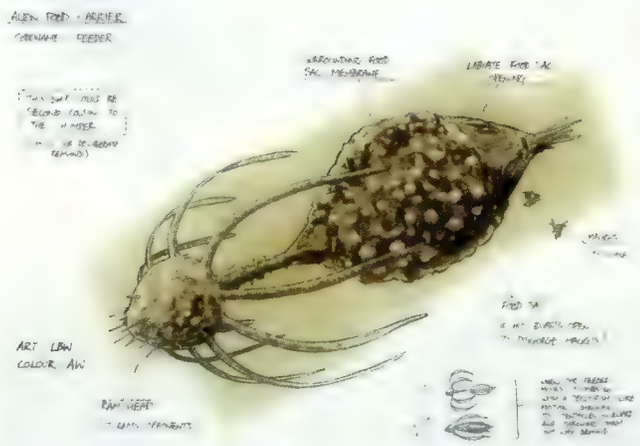
PCPP: Base any game in space and it's compared with Elite and Wing Commander, what new







(above left) Tony Francis
(above right) Ian Baverstock





We all want a space combat epic that breaks the Wing Commander hold over the genre. Xenocracy could be the one

does your game offer in terms of fresh objectives and ideas?

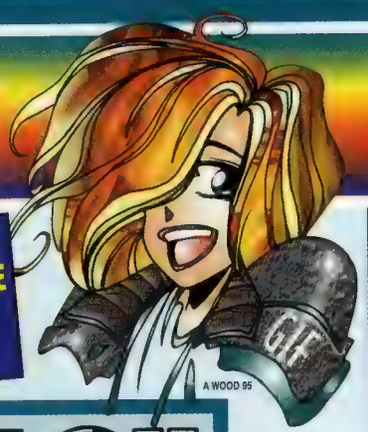
[Tony Francis] Certainly compared to WC, we have deliberately moved away from linear gameplay - the way you are pulled through the game and led through by a narrative, linked by FMV sequences. We have moved away from a very structured presentation with our own strategy systems that generate the missions, so you really don't know what's coming next. In addition to that, you're presented with a selection of missions and you can choose which ones to take. If you wanted to you could concentrate on surface missions all the time or combine missions or even fighting aliens all the time. If you were to do the latter you would lose for you must take into account the other important elements within the game. The important thing for us to emphasise is the non-linear approach to the game and this gives a replay value to the game for things will not be the same on subsequent plays. The setup will be different, the aliens will arrive at different times and in divergent positions giving it a random factor that will enhance Xenocracy both initially and in the long term. The politics are also a central theme, where the four powers have to be evenly balanced by the player.



PCPP Can you briefly give us a sequence of events for one mission?

[Tony Francis] Normally having come out of a previ-

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ous mission the player is presented with a debrief on the mission, followed by a political debrief, the political fall out, and what they have or haven't done. Having done that it would be advised to go to the current situations board to see what is going on and what has gone on. You can check the status of the inner planets to ensure that none of them are becoming too unstable or even too powerful. Having looked at that you can then make a decision over what mission you will fly. There are a number of missions presented to you or there are a number of situations that you can pre-empt. For example, if the aliens have invaded one of the mines you can choose, without being asked, to go and capture that mine back if you can see that inner planet is suffering economically by not having control of that mine. Having decided on your mission, you will then go and set your ship up, set the HUD up, weapon configuration of the ship, choose the ship you require, taking into account that certain craft are better than others in specific missions.





PCPP: The game is based in the solar system. Firstly, how much factual information have you used and secondly, how big is the game in terms of size?
[Tony Francis] The moons are the real ones. We went onto the NASA site and got the information for those, but because we are 8 thousand years into the future we have taken a lot of licence in terms of terraforming the planets. We have tried to ensure that all the planets are very different, most of the planets in real terms are very much the same. We have used where possible real astronomical data.



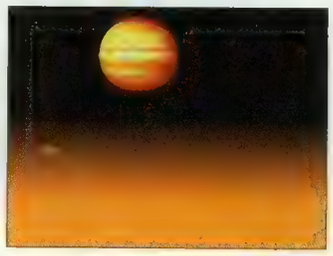


The ground terrain & craft ignore mainstream influences & go for the pure sci fi look

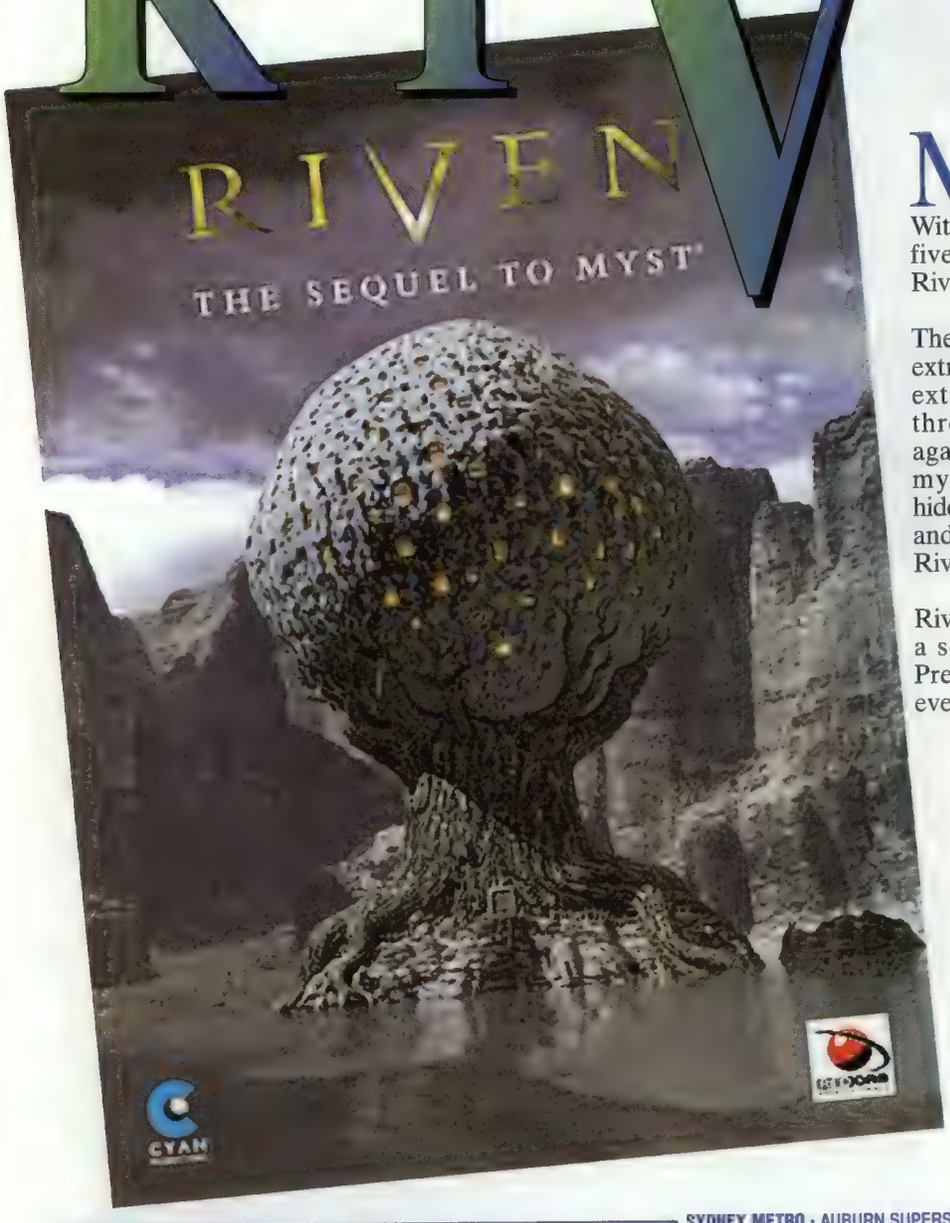
PCPP: How essential is the AI to the game, does the core of the game revolve around this?
[Tony Francis] The missions certainly do. We have written some quite sophisticated AI for the ships themselves and we have layered it so that the forces fight and react like real armed forces. Whereas you have an overall commander and he is in command of a number of squadrons, and he allocates the squadrons to their targets. The squadrons themselves allocate the ships within the squadrons in flights to targets another layer further down the rung. And then again the ships themselves in the flights decide on what target they are going for, so you don't get the effect you do in other games that have a flawed airline where you have 5 fighters all with exactly the same target priority function and they all say, well, that's my high priority target We get away from that by actually having ships allocated to targets in an intelligent way and the combat tends to break off into bunches rather than one great big dogfight in the middle.

You can send wingmen to do a full list of commands, to attack a specific target, you can tell them to cover you and whatever you do or you can tell them to just go off and do their own thing and they will then react in whatever way they see best.

You have a finite number of weapons systems officers - 5 WSOs - if you choose to take a wingman not only are you taking one of your squadron members to be in your ship you are taking another to be in the wingman's ship so it is quite possible you could loose 40% of your squadron's strength in one mission if you do very badly. They can die or they can be injured, eject in an ejection capsule and be picked up and then be off sick for a number of turns and unavailable. If your squadron runs down to zero strength then that is one of the ways you can lose the game because you are unable to field a force. You do not have to have a wingman but you must have at least one Weapon Systems Officer to fly or be present in the ship.



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HN16594

Pax Imperia 2



Like MOO2? You'll love Pax Imperia 2. Almost exactly the same, except in real time. Oh yes!

Category	Space strategy
Players	1-16
Publisher	THQ
Available	December

Anyone remember the name Pax Imperia 2? The much touted galactic conquest simulator that was rumoured to incorporate state of the art mind shattering graphics and to-die-for playability?

Well, 3 distributors later, it's almost ready. In fact, check out this months cover CD for a welcome surprise. The Pax Imperia Eminent Domain demo is included. The full version should be available even as you read this.

There is only one way to sum up Pax Imperia Eminent Domain. An unbelievably identical (and I mean identical) Masters of Orion 2 clone. In fact, it's so identical, I fear legal action may be taken by Microprose. The one saving grace that may avoid such litigation is that Pax Imperia ED is real time.

Yes, yes and YES! For anyone who tried to play MOO2 over the net, only to be bogged down by users who took half an hour to complete a turn, it was an incredibly painful process. With Internet play built in for up to 16 players, and of course, the real time component, Pax Imperia ED looks to be as popular multiplayer as Dark Reign currently is (and that's popular).

Here's how Pax Imperia ED plays: Just go play MOO2 but imagine it in real time. But seriously, Pax Imperia ED starts by allowing you to choose the race you wish to play, or to design your own. Once your race is ready, it's time to name your empire and choose a flag. As there is a flag that features 2 topless women, I'll wager an awful lot that you'll see said flag in almost every multi-player game played on the net.



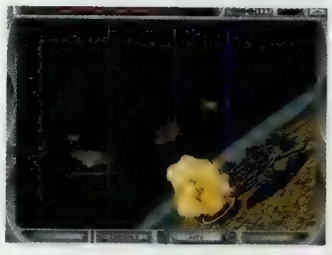
With that done, you start with one fully colonised planet, a scout and a coloniser. Each player starts in their own solar system and ships are sent through jump points to other solar systems to look for new planets to colonise.

From this point, you colonise new planets, spy on other players and research new technologies deciding whether to take an aggressive or more defensive stance. With every new piece of research you go and design a better warship. Eventually, you have a number of planets colonised, have built appropriate shipyards on each and can start to create your fleet.



Fleet management and attack are far superior in a real time environment. Within each solar system, the planets all orbit the sun, and your fleet ships if at a planet orbit the planet. What this means is that if an enemy ship warps in and your ship in orbit is on the other side of the screen, depending on your engines, you may not be able to intercept the enemy before you've lost a colony. This does allow for well organised hit and run tactics to occur.

Finally, combat in the real time environment is a lot more fun. In real time, you manipulate the ships into strike patterns and try to outflank your opponent. If you're attacked on more then one front, you can set the computer to automatically fight for you while you frantically swap between attacks issuing spot orders.



I'll say it again, Pax Imperia ED is MOO2 totally cloned, except in a real time environment. And thank God for that. MOO2 in my opinion is Game of the Year for 97 and the real time component adds so much more to the game, especially when we're all going to be playing it over the Net. THQ, the distributors, will be singing all the way to the bank on this one, Pax Imperia ED rocks. *J.L.*



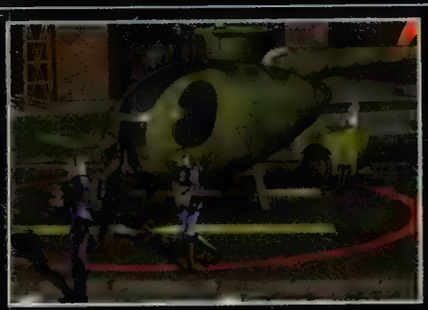
GUTS 'N' GARTERS

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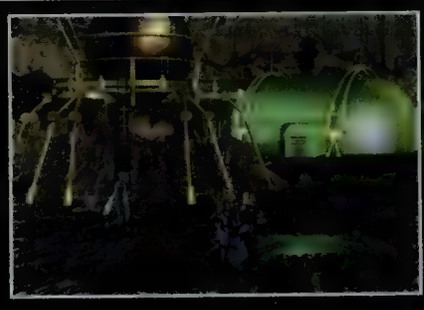
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Guts 'N' Garters is one on its own. To say it has arcade action in a stunning, multi-destructible environment with complex problems to be solved on the run is to miss out the game's incredible technical achievement of light sourcing and shadow management and fully animated locations.







PC DOS/ WIN '95

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Ancient Evil





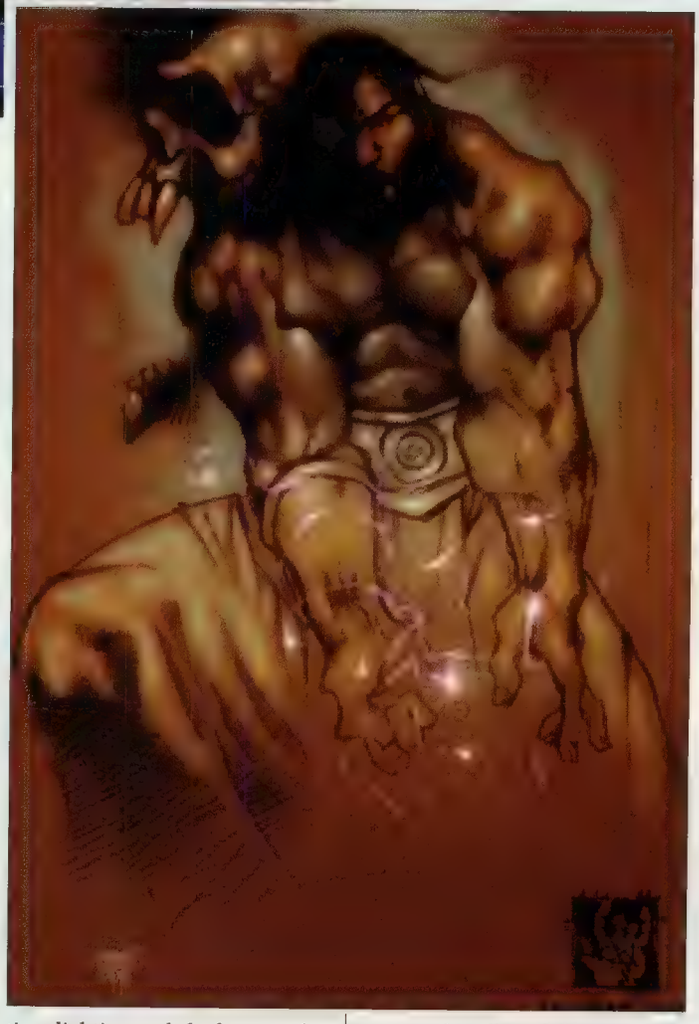
From rally driving to RPG. From Silver Lightning's Perth HQ come some very sexy games

Category	Adventure/RPG
Players	1
Publisher	Silver Lightning
Available	March

You might remember Australian developers Silver Lightning Software from their previous effort, Rally Challenge, which was released earlier this year. They've decided to go for something completely different this time around though, with the dark and brooding atmosphere of their RPG 'Ancient Evil'. The comparisons between the look of Diablo and Ancient Evil are obvious, though the gameplay is supposed to be markedly different - this is no mere Diablo clone.

There are similarities however, Ancient Evil uses a 3D isometric point of view, you take on the roles of characters with different specialisations (either spellcasting or hand-to-hand combat), and the task is to enter into a multi-level dungeon to take on a really nasty dude who has awaken after thousands of years asleep in his tomb. So, you're thinking Diablo clone, and in truth it seems that you're not all that far off the mark. However, there is plenty of room to manoeuvre and improve within the genre. SLS have gotten their hands on a pretty well established Australian artist, Ashley Wood, who's been involved in the comic world for years, and has done work on comics published by DC, Marvel, Acclaim as well as others. The artwork we've seen thus far is pretty special, and the general look of the game is pretty special too. The graphics are all going to be in hi-res 65,000 colours, with real time lighting and shadows, and real time particle effects and lighting systems - and the monsters are all fully textured 3D models too.



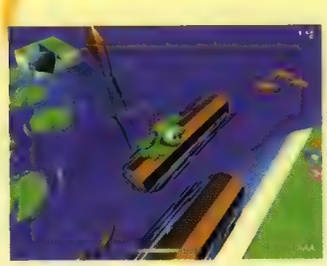


Along with this, we're promised over 30 different monsters and spells, a fully interactive environment, directional stereo sound, and that it will run on a meagre P90 system too. If the final product lives up to its' potential, we may well be looking at a very cool game.

Frogger



After selling 4 million units in the early 80's, the Frog is back! Armed with new moves like **power croak**, **heat-seeking tongue** and **super jump**! He's ready for anything! But he's lost in strange worlds filled with hungry enemies and dangerous terrain and its down to you to guide him back to safety through such hazards as polluted ponds, hostile deserts and dark, dangerous caverns.





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Die by the Sword

Category	Action/Adventure
Players	1-4
Publisher	Interplay
Available	Early '98

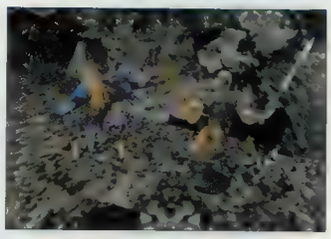
The title of this game is somewhat misleading. While you can actually die by the sword, you can also die by your own bloodied limb! Yes! After an enemy Orc takes your leg off with its massive axe, you can pick up your own leg, hop off after it (ahh, tis only a flesh wound!), and try to bludgeon it to death with your own leg! How's that for cheap and nasty thrills?

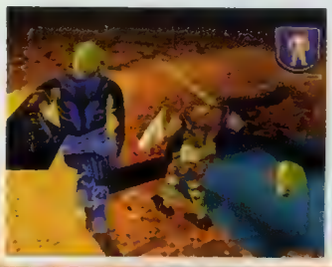
Obviously there's much more to Die By The Sword (all true to the theme of bloodied and fully depicted violence, of course) - after all, you can't sell a game just on a bit of gory and bloody violence. No, and that's not why this game got a whole heap of passers-by running from all directions to get a good look at it as we previewed it.

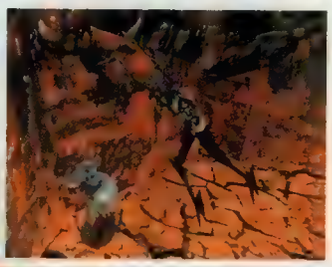
Die By The Sword is a 3D graphical adventure with combat playing a major role. Armed with a massive sword and shield, Eric must fight his way through the land of Tiber. Saving the land from all evil seems to be typical adventure game fare, but worry not because this is where the standard nature of this game ends. This is mostly due to the VSIM Motion Control system. Developed specifically for this game, the VSIM engine generates the entire range of human movement and is not restricted to a limited set of pre-defined moves. Basically this means that rather than having a set couple of moves and animations up your sleeve, like run, roll, jump, long jump etc, you get a character that fully responds to all external stimuli realistically. Interplay claim that you have full control of your character - apparently with the ability of an unlimited number of movement and attack combinations. You can run, jump, swing your sword etc, and the look of this is truly amazing and life-like! Using a 3D graphics accelerator, the graphics of Die By The Sword are a treat. However, not in the truly aesthetic sense. Rather than jaw dropping scenery (it still is impressive though), the joy of Die by the Sword is the way the thing moves. Watching as your character hops about on one leg (perfect stamina and balance), swinging your sword about is a sight. As is the bungee fighting technique - after being snagged by a rope, you are left to hang upside down and fight your way from this position. This is whole lot of fun - you swing about on the rope and take wild stabs at the enemies as they try to take shots at you. You can also target specific body parts, and even take the head clean off an opponent if your skill or luck is high enough.

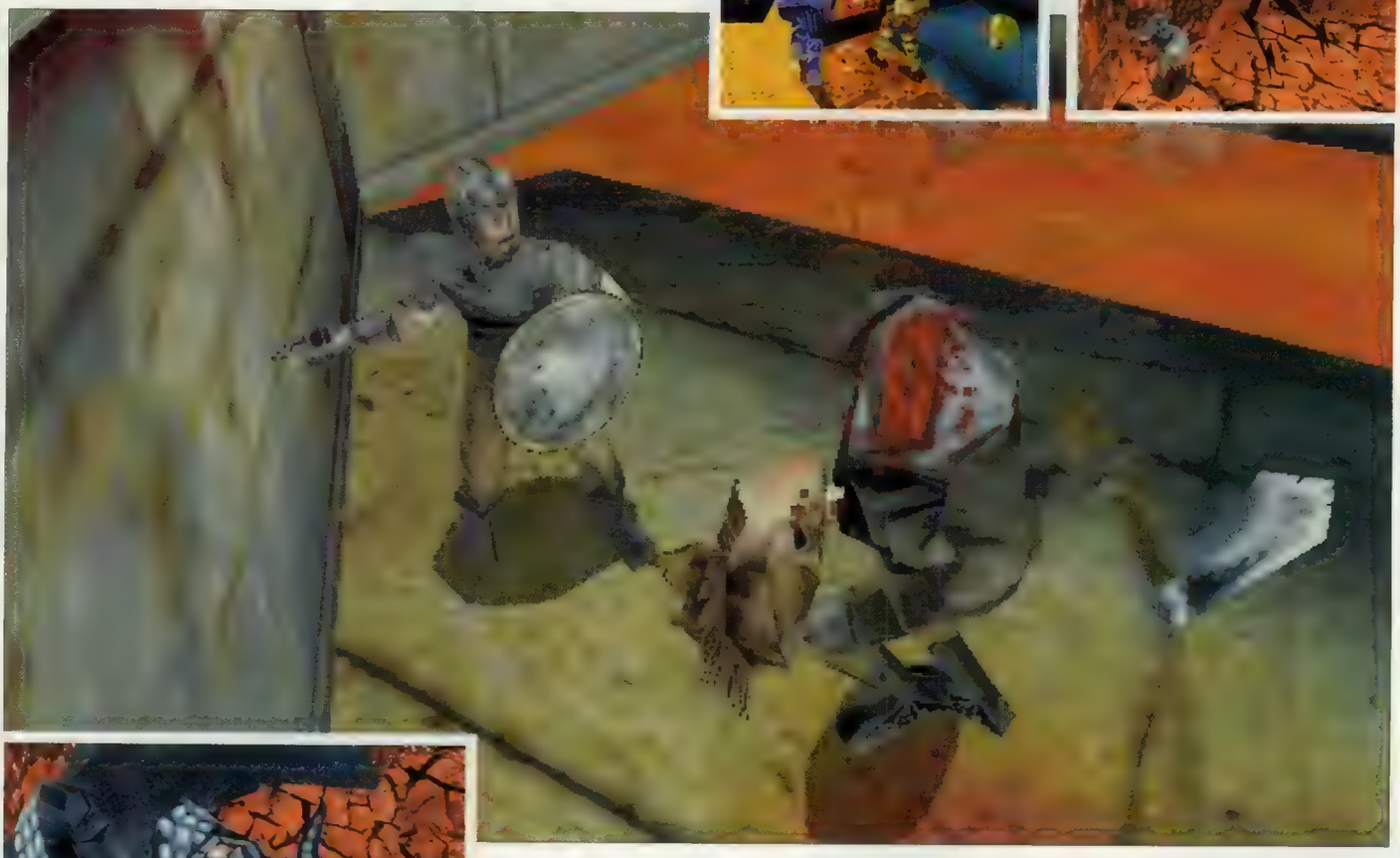
Die By The Sword has two types of play. There's the standard single player quest mode - 6 huge levels with multiple solutions and plenty of environmental hazards to contend with, as well as Arena play. Arena can be played as a single player match or with up to three other players. Arena is an area in which you meet up with a variable number of opponents and pit it till only one person is left standing. With three control methods (easy, difficult and bloody difficult yet totally realistic) and the ability to customise, save and trade combination moves created by the player.

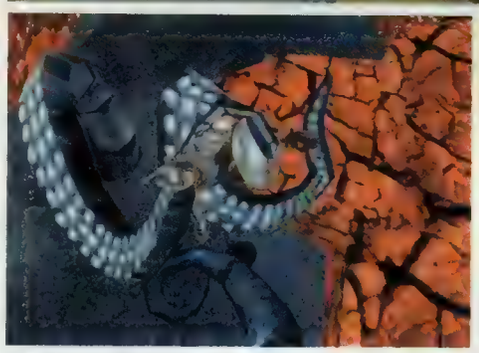
The attraction has got nothing to do with the totally awesome and guilt-free fun of being able to graphically hack each other to death in real time 3D combat.











(main) Off with his head! This is one hack & slash that looks like doing the genre some justice

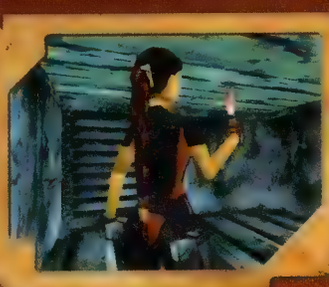
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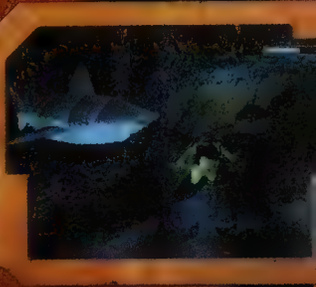
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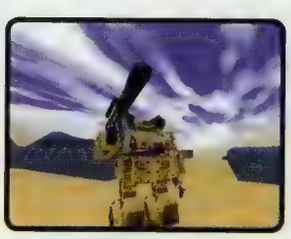
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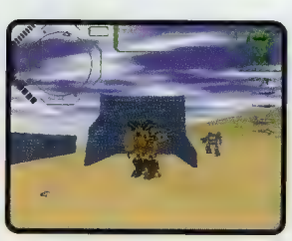
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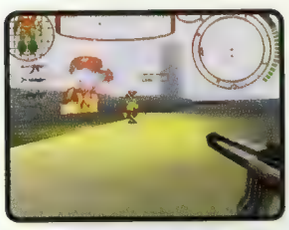
ENGAGE IN A BRUTAL WAR PITTING FORMER ALLIES AGAINST EACH OTHER: THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN LEAGUES.

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I-War

Category	Space combat sim
Players	1
Publisher	Ocean
Available	Jan



The perfect space combat sim has been an elusive thing. So far we've had extremes; from the hard-core X-Wing vs. TIE to the flossy but attractive Wing Commander series. Valiant efforts have been made at perfecting the genre, such as the brave but ultimately disappointing Battlecruiser 3000. But a void remains... What's a gamer to do?

Looming on the horizon and hopefully here to save us all is I-War from Ocean. Now, the developers say this is the one, and from what we've seen, they may be pretty close to the mark.

The game is set in our own universe, in a future when the Commonwealth Navy is up against the troublesome rebels. Or something.

A priority for the team was modelling the spaceship as convincingly as possible. Things are looking good in this dept. Your craft is a 150 meter long corvette with 4 crew stations, each of which can be manned at any time. Take the captain's seat, pilot's, engineer's or gunner's - or leave the computer in charge. Combat with cut scenes is what' it's all about, but expect some original epics and none of canned, pre-scripted stuff of lesser games.

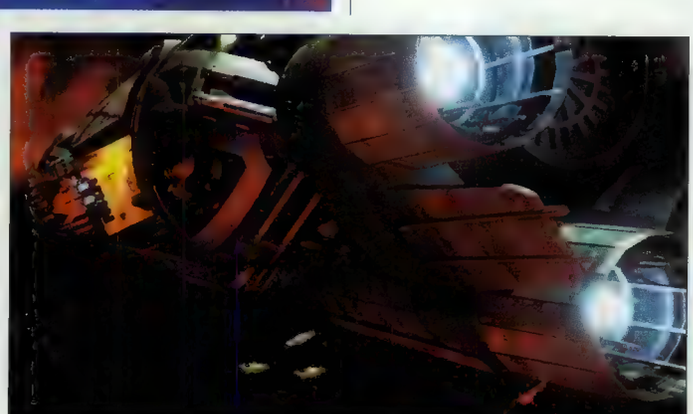




Ever heard of it before? Neither had we, but it looks like a biggie, though so far we've reveived more cut-scene renders than gameplay shots

I-War looks the part too. Over 2-Gigabytes of textures have been used, with almost 600 Megs dedicated to the objects alone. Wow.

With almost no pre-promotion, this one has crept up on us in stealth mode. Expect a big splash when it hits though, for on paper at least I-War is shaping up to be the biggest and the best space sim yet.



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Outcast

Category	Action/Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Infogames
Available	Jan

Infogrames are positioning this title as a competitor to Tomb Raider 2. A shame really, because Outcast looks and plays completely differently and is superior in every respect. It's a different kind of game, in fact, with the only relevant common element being the viewpoint. Lara has a lot to answer for...

Being a typically French game, Outcast features a very strong storyline. Experiments with new technologies designed to enable travel to alternate universes fail miserably, and a massive black hole is growing where the secret lab used to be. A secret lab we can manage without, but the problem is that the hole is growing at the usual alarming rate and the future of the world is at stake. Cue dramatic music... So, through the time-space anomaly are sent a team of Kurt Russelesque action-type problem solvers and the game, as they say, is afoot.

Check out the screenshots. Look familiar? Let those memories of Comanche flood back, for yes, that's Voxel 3D graphics at work, but now littered with polygon objects as well. The effect is nice indeed. The richer colors and weird landscapes possible with Voxel have enabled a truly convincing alien world.

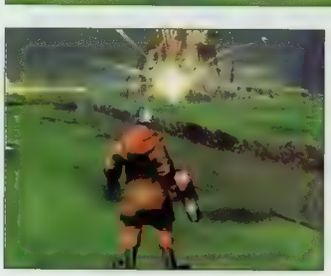
Those disappointed with Tomb Raider's empty style of gameplay should take a long look at Outcast when it arrives. More news as we get it.



Why is it that just about every sci-fi game, novel, or film has people wearing really stupid clothes? Genetic engineering?



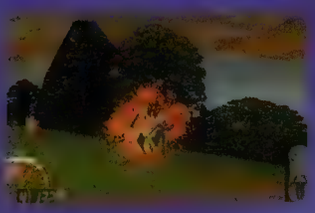








IN THE NEWS AGAIN











MORE CARS
MORE CIRCUITS
MORE CARNAGE
EXTRA EXTRA













SPLAT PACK

SCi

OFFICE OF FILM AND LITERATURE CLASSIFICATION

MA 15+ RESTRICTED

(15 YEARS & OVER) "HIGH LEVEL VIOLENCE"

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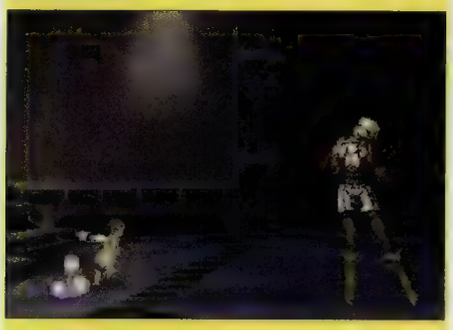
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MESSIAH

Category Action/Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Roadshow
Available Mid/late 1998



Shiny's next PC effort after MDK is Messiah - another truly weird game. You take on the role of a little angel fella, and the storyline runs something like this; the seven seals of the apocalypse are becoming broken by a devilish (literally) plot to start armageddon ahead of time, thereby giving the Devil a head start in the killing and stealing of souls. God gets wind of the plan, and sends an angel to stop the seals being broken before the appointed time. You take on the role of 'Bob' the angel, who can take control of human bodies to help him in his task. It looks fantastic, and was turning lots of heads at E3 and ECTS, even though it's only about 5% done.

HEXPLORE

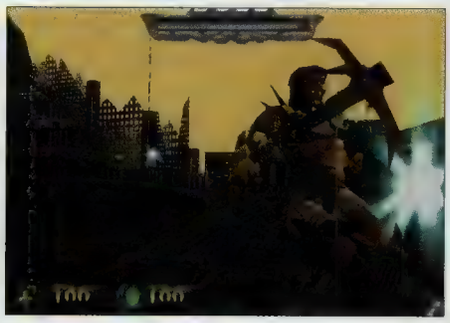
Category RPG
Players 1-Internet
Publisher Infogames
Available Late 1997/Early 1998



Taking a leaf from the Ultima book, Hexplore at first glance seems to be a pretty straightforward clone of the popular series, and to an extent the internet version. However, there might be more to this than at first meets the eye. For starters, one player will be put in control of up to four characters, choosing from the usual magician/warrior/barbarian/ranger classes, and also a display that changes around to find the best angle (and if anyone can pull something like this off, indications are that it'll be someone French). Other than that however, it doesn't seem to be all that much of a groundbreaking game, and looks content to follow in the footsteps of Diablo and the Ultima series.

TUROK DINOSAUR HUNTER

Category First person shooter
Players 1
Publisher Acclaim
Available Early



The Nintendo 64 is a very adequate gaming platform, and there's sure to be plenty of games that make the journey across from the Nintendo 64 to the PC. Turok is one such game, and the splendiferous graphics from the Nintendo 64 version look to have been transported over to the PC well, with native 3Dfx support. The game itself is essentially a doom clone, a first person perspective shooter, and obviously enough you're a dinosaur hunter who runs about killing dinosaurs. The weapons are something special, though, starting from a knife through to an 'atomic fusion cannon'.

PILGRIM

Category Graphical adventure
Players 1
Publisher Infogames
Available Late 1997/Early 1998

There's absolutely nothing wrong with a good graphical adventure, but many GA's miss the mark somewhat with the gameplay. Nowadays, most come with marvellous graphics and highly detailed motion capture figures, though many are let down by the substandard gameplay. Pilgrim is set in the France in the 13th Century, those deep dark medieval times when men were men and personal hygiene was haphazard. The artwork and design are (as per usual for Infogrames) truly stunning, and come from the 'well known drawer' Moebius (well known for his artwork in French comics. It's hard to judge from what little we've seen of the gameplay itself, but what we have seen did look enticing - the puzzles made sense, and the interface was nice and simple.



FORSAKEN

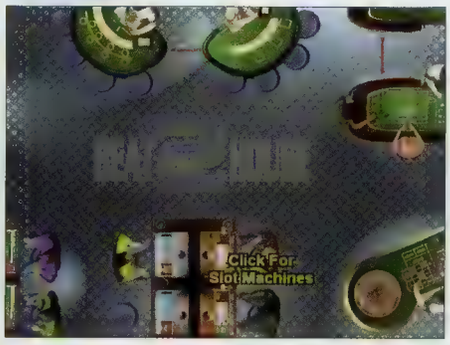
Category First person shooter
Players 1-15 (network)
Publisher Acclaim
Available May-ish 1998



Those damned scientists! They had to go and muck about with the fabric of space and time, didn't they. Sure, they made a new and important discovery, but the problem was their discovery was that mucking about with fabrics of space and time tends to blow up the planet, and everyone on it. So the Earth is declared dead by the ruling council of the Entire universe, at which point the bikie scavengers come in to strip the carcass of Earth bare. And this is where you come in, armed with 15 different weapons, your task is to steal as much stuff as you can. You can choose from around 12 different hover bike riding scavenger mercenaries, and with support for almost every 3d accelerator card on the planet, it looks fantastic.

BEAT THE HOUSE 2

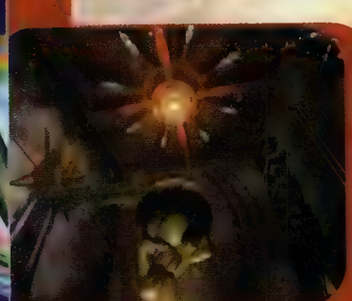
Category Gambling
Players 1-4
Publisher Interplay
Available Jan/Feb



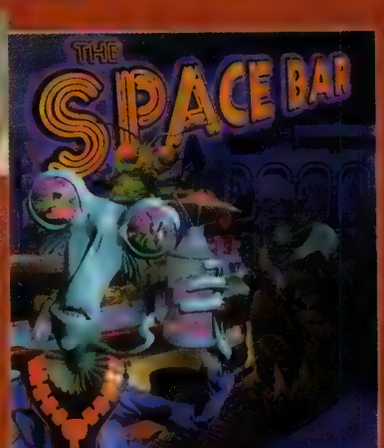
Viva Las Vegas! Viva Las Sydney Casino! Nah, doesn't have quite the same ring to it, does it. Ah well, for those of us who live in a state equipped with the latest in money losing technology (i.e. a casino) but either can't afford to venture into a casino (or have been banned from one...), salvation is at hand. Beat the house 2 extols you to do just that, beat the house at a range of casino gambling activities including baccarat, slots, poker (in a few variations), blackjack, craps and roulette. Helpfully, it also comes with a tutorial so that at least you know why you're losing all your virtual money, though why anyone would want to click a mouse button on a slot machine where you won't win anything tangible is beyond me.

HILAD'S LATEST HAT-TRICK



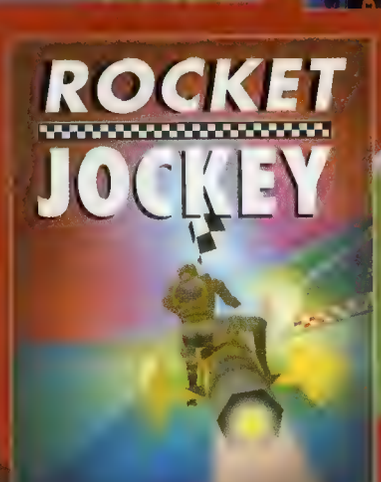


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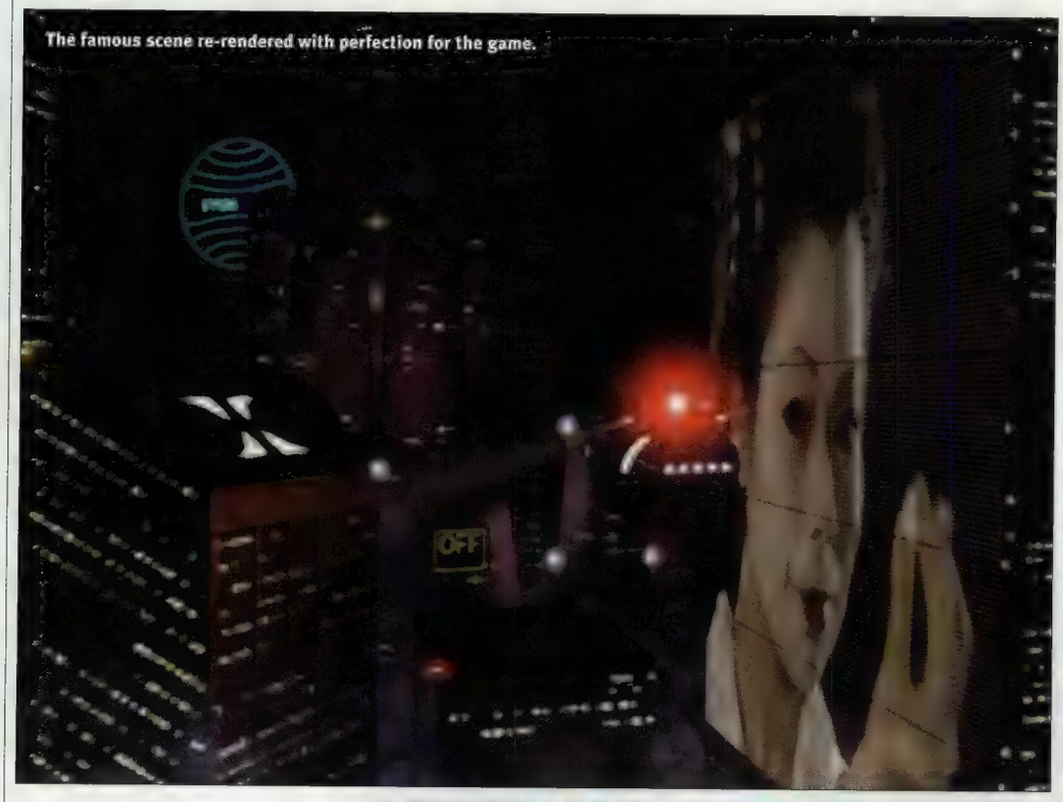
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BLADE RUNNER

It doesn't have Harrison Ford, but it does have everything else you'd expect plus much, much more.

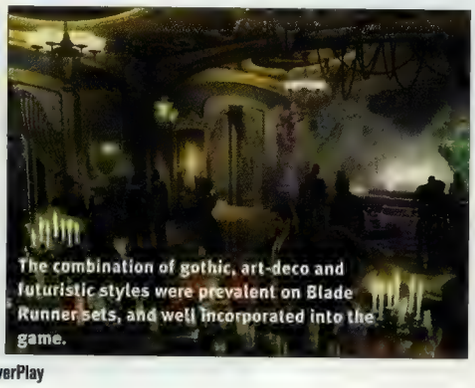

The famous scene re-rendered with perfection for the game.

2019AD, Los Angeles. The dawn skyline is orange not from the morning sun, but from decades of air contamination that has forced many to seek new lives off world.

Amidst the never ending bustle of the street below, a constantly berating acid rain beats down heavily on the crowd that had gathered around Runciters - the location of a frighteningly gruesome murder of "real" animals. The camera pans down on a rendered scene that is so visually inviting, rich with colour, and brought to life with such painstaking detail that the rain showering down on the set is refracting the neon reflection in the puddle. From above, a spinner descends down and decelerates with controlled bursts of pressurised steam, to gracefully touch onto the road as the shuffling crowd leers to see who will emerge. The spinner door opens whilst the turbines slow down with a descending whine. From behind the controls a repdetec steps out, his 3 quarter length trench coat being a give-away to those who know the biz.

With this opening scene begins your journey into the Blade Runner world. Leave all preconceptions of an adventure game behind you, because Blade Runner by Westwood Studios has redefined the entire adventuring genre.

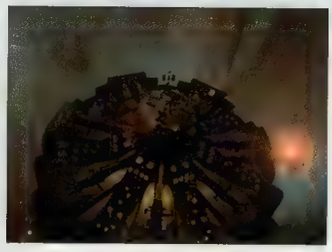

(above) The famous Animoid Row, this scene alone comprises of over 30 million polygons.


The combination of gothic, art-deco and futuristic styles were prevalent on Blade Runner sets, and well incorporated into the game.

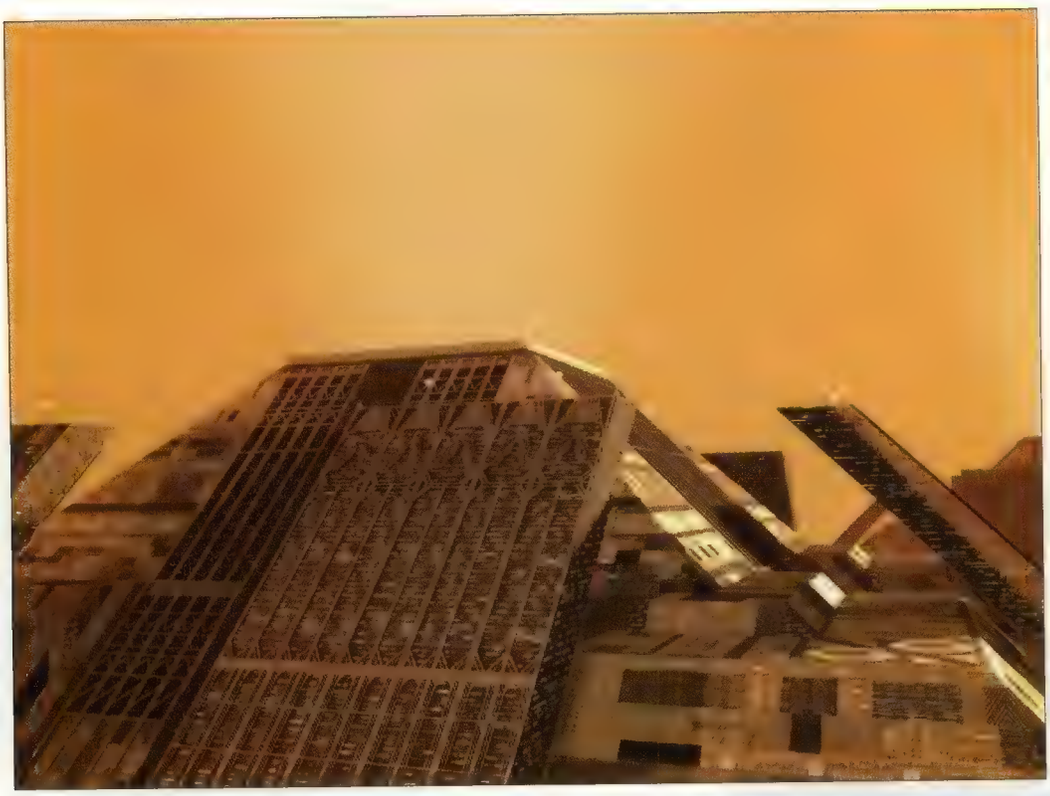
Intro to game, seamless

You only have to see the screenshots themselves to realise the visual perfection that this opening scene generates - until it stops that is, and just seems to sit there. There's even a mouse pointer on the screen, which is rather unusual considering that the game must be loading the adventure portion. It doesn't hit you until you click, and see Ray McCoy walk to the mouse location that you realise that what you just watched wasn't a cut-scene at all, but the real-time 24 bit colour 3D engine at work. Around you, the rain is still falling with the sound so realistic you check outside just to make sure. And that puddle it hits, well it just keeps on refracting the overhead neon light, until too many droplets of rain destroy the reflection totally. Steam from the vents around you eject translucent smoke and the bright neon lighting of the store-fronts name casts an eerie glow over the curious crowd.



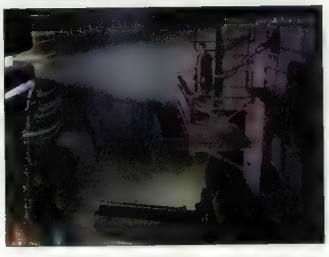


It was like Westwood could feel the many millions of fans out there breathing down their necks. Blade Runner was, and still is, (if not the most) a visually stimulating, appealing and



(left) The Tyrell Corporation building in all its glory.
(below) *If only you could see, what I've seen with your eyes.* - Batty
(bottom) Ray, having been just dropped off by the spinner.





breathtaking special FX masterpiece. One challenge that Westwood have met in their game to complete fulfilment and beyond all expectation.

Man or machine?

You can be forgiven for not knowing what Blade Runner is all about, especially our younger readers, for when it came out back in 1982, this remarkable movie was met with a less then eager audience. Directed by Ridley Scott; a man renown for his genius and majestic awe-inspiring sets, at the time of Blade Runner, his previous success had been none other then Alien. Blade Runner was a unique movie that took Sci-fi to a new level. Dealing with more than just confronting, or killing Alien entities, Blade Runner examined the effects of the introduction of artificially created humans; called Replicants' into human society.

Blade Runners, which you are one off in the game, have only one goal, to exterminate any Replicants (or skin jobs as they're referred to by the repdetecs) on earth. Within the movie, Harrison Ford; who plays a Blade Runner named Deckard, eventually falls in love with Rachael, a prototype Nexus 6 made for Dr Elden Tyrell, the Head of the firm responsible for their manufacture. Deemed for use only off-world as slave labour or for "pleasure", often the Replicants sought identity or more importantly equality that inevitably leads them back to earth in search of answers. In the case of the Replicants from the movie, they were seeking a way to stop their conclusion date of only 4 years. The only reason for the life span - forced obsolescence. So the owner will buy a new one.

It is this complex and overwhelming emotional environment within the movie that had characters competing for your attention and blurring the lines of good and evil. A very complex form or drama, Westwood have managed to incorporate this into the game extremely well.





(top) The Voight Kampf Test & (below) the Esper image analyzer

Choose your destiny

The way it's portrayed is by a series of moods you can give your character. You can elect to be antagonistic towards the Replicants, or a Replicant sympathiser. This may seem at extraordinarily cross purposes within your role, as someone who retires Replicants, but another facet of the movie that has also been well preserved in the game is not only the question of the Replicants "humanity", but the ambiguity of the Blade Runners own identity itself.

Like Deckard in the movie, there is the possibility that Ray himself is a Replicant. This allows the game an opportunity that proposes a dilemma which mimics beautifully the emotional complexity of Blade Runner the movie. As in one possibility of the game, one of the Replicants discovered is a small child, with Ray's only option as a Blade Runner to shoot her. This however isn't achieved in a heroic shoot-out where your life is at stake, instead, the child looks at the camera and pleads for her life. The choice is made purely by you, on your own perceptions of whether a Replicant is an object owned by man, or deserving the rights of a living human.

If it hasn't been obvious already, Blade Runner the game isn't the movie. Set in the same time period, it utilises the rich Future Noir atmosphere of the movie and some of the characters, but you do not play Deckard, who, incidentally, is referred to in the game. This isn't to say that other characters from the movie aren't there, Dr Tyrell is very much alive, Rachael plays a part, and the irritable Doctor Chew adds some elements of humour to the game that purists may find unwelcome. Playing Blade Runner although essentially being a point and click game is far from just that. Westwood were right in knowing that the fans out there would be expecting much more. What they've opted for instead is a real time environment that you participate in. Making it rather like a simulation.

Of the 13 major characters under investigation in the game

The original movie defines Replicants as:
android (an'droid) n. Gk. humanoid automation. more at robot./ 1. early version utilised for work too boring, dangerous or unpleasant for humans. 2. second generation bio-engineered. Electronic relay units and positronic brains. Used in space to explore inhospitable environments. 3. third generation synthogenetic. REPLICANT, constructed of skin/flesh culture. Selected enogenic transfer conversion. Capable of self perpetuating thought. Paraphysical abilities. Developed for emigration program.



(above) As a rookie Blade Runner, Gaff makes an appearance to taunt you, or are you a Replicant, and he's waiting to retire you? (left) This cut scene is virtually identical to the one in the movie when Harrison Ford (Deckard) makes his way to the Tyrell building.

world, any 5 could be Replicants. The actual ones being generated randomly each time you start a new game. Your role is to sift through the masses of clues to decipher the skin-jobs that need to be retired. To assist you in doing this are 2 key devices from the movie, the Esper and the Voigt-Kampg Test.

Your tool on the job

As you move from location to location, your Kia, (a type of digital assistant we don't have the translation for) keeps track of all the clues you have gathered allowing you to report back to the police headquarters and upload the data into the mainframe. After a few seconds of processing, you receive information back on suspects, locations or gathered evidence. There's also a lab where evidence can be submitted and the results left on the mainframe for you to download. Of course it wouldn't be the Esper if you didn't have pictures to analyse. This side of the game is both infinitely playable and mimics the movie extremely well. Pictures are inserted into the Esper and you can then zoom around them looking for valuable clues. In the game, each photograph is represented by a true 3D object. What this essentially allows is infinite zooming, as all the engine has to do is re-render the scene in a higher resolution. Also because the photograph is a 3D object, any number of clues can be hidden in the picture relevant to the plot randomly generated at the beginning of the game.

The Voigt-Kampf is a device used to detect whether an entity is a Replicant or not by measuring their levels of empathy based on a series of distressing questions. Offering the choice of low, high or medium intensity questions, the player has to exercise some strategic caution. If you start to suspect a subject is a Replicant and are erratic in your questioning, making them nervous, you can find yourself dead very quickly. Finally, with clues in hand, you then move on to any of the over 100 locations and can ask people questions. Or in an effort to second guess the Replicants wait for them to arrive at a destination.



The last paragraph may seem a touch unusual for an adventure game, but as all the characters in the game are AI scripted and move about of their own accord, it's possible for them to talk "off camera".

As word gets around from the in game characters, your target can become more resourceful in evading you. Or once the Replicants know they are being pursued, may decide that attack is the best form of defence, and you find yourself becoming the hunted, not the hunter.

In such situations, an extraordinary shootout can occur where Replicants run away, hide behind walls evading your fire, or even take someone walking the street as a human shield. Firefights although not at all the essential part of the game, are both uniquely suspenseful and challenging, making Blade Runner superior to any other adventure out there.

The technology

Within its fully 3D 24 bit colour world, the exquisite beauty that is Blade Runner just cannot be mentioned. The team at Westwood have created a perfectly seamless environment where objects of cut scene quality aren't part of a static background, but dynamic within the world. The best example of this is when McCoy moves between scenes, a real-time camera will up and move with him, following his movements allowing for dramatic shifts in perspective with cinematic prowess.

Even more striking are the volumetric effects (like rain, fog, and shadows), which are all enabled by atmospheric attenuation and layering, something possible only with 3D objects. These volumetric effects also allow characters (3D objects of 35,000 polygons each) to slip in and out of the shadows or emerge menacingly from a bank of mist, adding to the tension and thrill of the action. Most amazing however is that even with as many as 50 lights per set, you don't need a 3D accelerator, nor are they even supported.

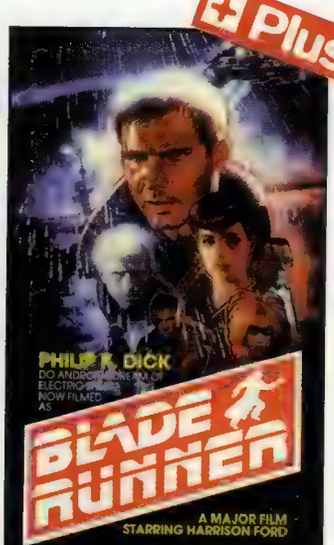
Blade Runner is more than just a game. It is an exceptional masterpiece that shows us what modern PC gaming should be like. It embellishes all that Ridley Scott strived so hard to achieve in his Future Noir atmosphere, and proves that Blade Runner was more than just an attempt to cash in on a hot license. But an intense labour of love by a team who truly appreciated the movie. Just how it should be.

Jere Lawrence

PC PowerPlay GOLD 96%

Category	Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Westwood Studios
Price	$TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now
For	The most atmospheric, beautifully detailed environment to adventure, nay make that Role Play in, ever yet created for a computer gaming environment
Against	Certain elements of humour have been added to the game that, although they don't affect the gaming experience at all, Blade Runner purists might find that it taints the perfectly recreated bleak world we all love
Need	P90, 16Mb RAM, Win95, 4 x CD
Want	P2 266, 64Mb, 24 x CD

Plus



Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?
Philip K. Dick
The brilliant book upon which the original movie was based. Track it down, buy it, read it and do the complete Blade Runner experience.



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AFL '98

Devoted armchair coaches, managers and players should take heart, for AFL '98 is an absolutely sterling game that deserves attention from every sport and sport-sim fan, irrespective of which code you prefer.



The more observant of you will notice that there's no 50 metre line - don't worry, that will be in the final version

One of the best aspects of Aussie Rules is the fluidity of modern day play. The game rarely stops for any length of time, and because there's no offside players are positioned all over the field, enabling play to cover all areas of the field. And this is one of the best parts of AFL '98, it's captured that element of fast and free play almost perfectly - play a game that runs for the same length of time as a real game and you'll walk away afterwards knowing you've been involved in a contest, with all the associated stress and strain, and possibly injury.

Silly umpires included

Ahhh, Aussie Rules. Players wearing really tight and very silly looking shorts, leaping gracefully on the shoulders of their opposition, fluid and fast gameplay, rabid fans screaming for the umpires blood after almost every decision, commentators second to none, goal umpires who act ridiculously when a goal or behind is scored, forwards who are called God for years and then unceremoniously dropped when things get a bit rocky. Ah yes, AFL has it all, and AFL 98 has captured the essence of Aussie Rules almost perfectly and distilled it into a quite excellent game - easily one of the best sports sims this year.

What would you want from an AFL sim though? You'd want all the teams, with all the players in their correct positions, and accurate stats for them. You've' got 'em in AFL 98. You'd want oodles of real time commentary from Bruce MacAvaney. You've got it in AFL '98. You'd want players that move and react realistically, players that can leap gracefully into the air to take marks, tackles that can injure other players, shepherding, crowds chanting for your team, and an easy to control but powerful ball delivery mechanism. You've got it all in AFL '98. Simply put, AFL '98 is the Aussie Rules sim to have for now and the foreseeable future (until AFL '99 comes out, anyway).

Lets start at the start though, and right from that start this title is marked as a quality release. The obligatory FMV sequence is very nicely done indeed, and captures the excitement and general thuggery that goes hand in hand with AFL, you get a montage of clips from past AFL games showing players getting the tar whupped out of them. Once you get into the game itself though, it just gets better. You can choose from an exhibition match (just a one off match between two teams of your choosing), a pre-season tournament, the full premiership season, just the final 8 series, or a training scenario (which is just a game where the opposition doesn't move, so you can practice your marks and running game). From there, there's still more options to run through, including the length of the game (from 4 minutes per quarter through to 25), how hard the game is to be (either arcade or professional), whether to play with the possibility of injuries or not, and what weather conditions to play in. Here's where







Fast, exciting gameplay, Bruce MacAvaney commentating, Libba lying in a crumpled heap on the ground. It doesn't get any better

the Melbourne origins of Aussie Rules show through, because the choices of weather conditions run from stormy to windy to cloudy, and that's it. Well, I suppose most games are played in Melbourne after all...

Real physics

Anyway, after you've run through the options available to you, it's on to the game itself, and you won't be disappointed either. Right from the opening siren the gameplay is fast and exciting, and it never really stops. The players are only sprites, and up close they do look more than a little blocky, but from the most often used camera angle they look fine. The animation of the players is something to behold though - if a player is chasing the ball and it bounces off in a strange direction then he'll have to slow down, wait for his inertia to stabilise and then turn his body back in the right direction. Also, when they're not involved in the play they don't just stand there, they'll have a bit of a stretch and jog on the spot to keep themselves awake. And then there's the marks, which are such an integral part of the real game - developers The Creative Assembly have paid a great deal of attention to the reactions of the players in a marking situation. Take a running leap from behind and if you time it right you'll leap up on top of the player in front, taking him out of the contest and elevating your position at the same time (and, if you're lucky, Big Bruce will voice his appreciation of your manoeuvre; 'One of the great marks' or 'ohhhhh, what a mark!' and plenty of others too). In fact, all the player movement is wonderfully animated, from marking to running to bouncing the ball to tackling, it's all there, and it all looks great.

Control, too, is a pleasant experience although a 4 button gamepad is heartily recommended. Now, as with most games, it will take a little while before you become familiar with which buttons to press and when (especially for AFL '98 because the timing of jumps for a mark is very important) - but once you get the hang of it, it's simple, straightforward, and works well. When your team has the ball, you have



OK, so the Swans player is stretching or tying his shoelaces...but what's the Hawthorn player doing? Don't think we want to know...









the option of a handball, a kick, or a quick burst of speed to evade those nasty defenders. And to help you in your task, when you have the ball you'll see a series of arrows pointing in up to the possible 8 directions. These arrows indicate where your teammates are, and the direction you should kick the ball to reach them. Alternatively, you can also kick for space if you wish, with a quick tap of the fire button sending a chip kick away, and the longer you hold down the fire button, the longer the kick will be. Then there's handballing, which follows much the same process, though with smaller arrows indicating possible directions for ball dispersal. Once your player has control of the ball within the 50 metre line, the kicking arrow will become darker, indicating that a shot for goal is on - and the more time you have to prepare your shot the more accurate it will be - just like the real thing. Needless to say, most times you have the ball in the goal scoring area you'll be under some pretty harsh pressure from the opposition, and taking a mark within goal scoring range is much preferred. To start a movement from your own half, running the ball out from the backs, out wide to the wingmen, a couple of neat handpasses, and then a long bomb down into the goal square topped off by a huuuuge mark from your full forward is a special feeling, but you'll still need to finish the movement off with the kick for goal. Once you take a mark play will stop (unless you decide to play on), and the player will take a few steps back, at which point you decide where to kick the ball, whether that be towards another player or the goal, and a powerbar 'three click method' comes into play (once to start, once to define power, and once to determine how straight it goes). It's an extremely functional and simple control method, and becomes almost seamless after a while, and this carries through to the defensive manoeuvre as well. When the opposition has the ball, you can grab the opposition (which, depending upon the player, might knock the ball free or might just force the player to handball) or go for a full on shoulder charge - which can both be a devastating weapon and also a hefty liability. When done correctly, a shoulder charge will put the opposition on the ground and leave the ball running free, but when mis-timed the umpire will penalise you. Then there's the punch out, from the centre bounce or a ball-up, or just when you want to annoy an opposition member going for a mark. Punches aren't the easiest things to time properly, but there's a great sense of satisfaction in punching the ball out of the opposition's hands just when they thought they'd taken a screamer of a mark.

Like TV, but better

In all, AFL '98 is possibly one of the best sports sims I have ever seen, bar none. They creators have captured the elements of the real game so well that you might be excused for thinking you're watching TV. Players act and react realistically, the ball physics are well done, the control method blends in with the game so well it's not funny. And on top of this, now all you notoriously parochial AFL fans have the chance to do what you always wanted to do, whether that's take out Greg Williams repeatedly (as I choose to do), make a fool out of Tony Modra, hammer Chris Lewis in the back or just pummel the Roo Boy, your darkest fantasies can be realised. Oh, and you also get to play as your heroes as well - but I prefer being bastardly towards the anti-heroes. Whichever side your psyche tends towards, you're sure to have a great time with AFL. For once, the blurb actually means something - if it's in AFL, it's in AFL '98.

Gareth Jones

PC PowerPlay GOLD 94%

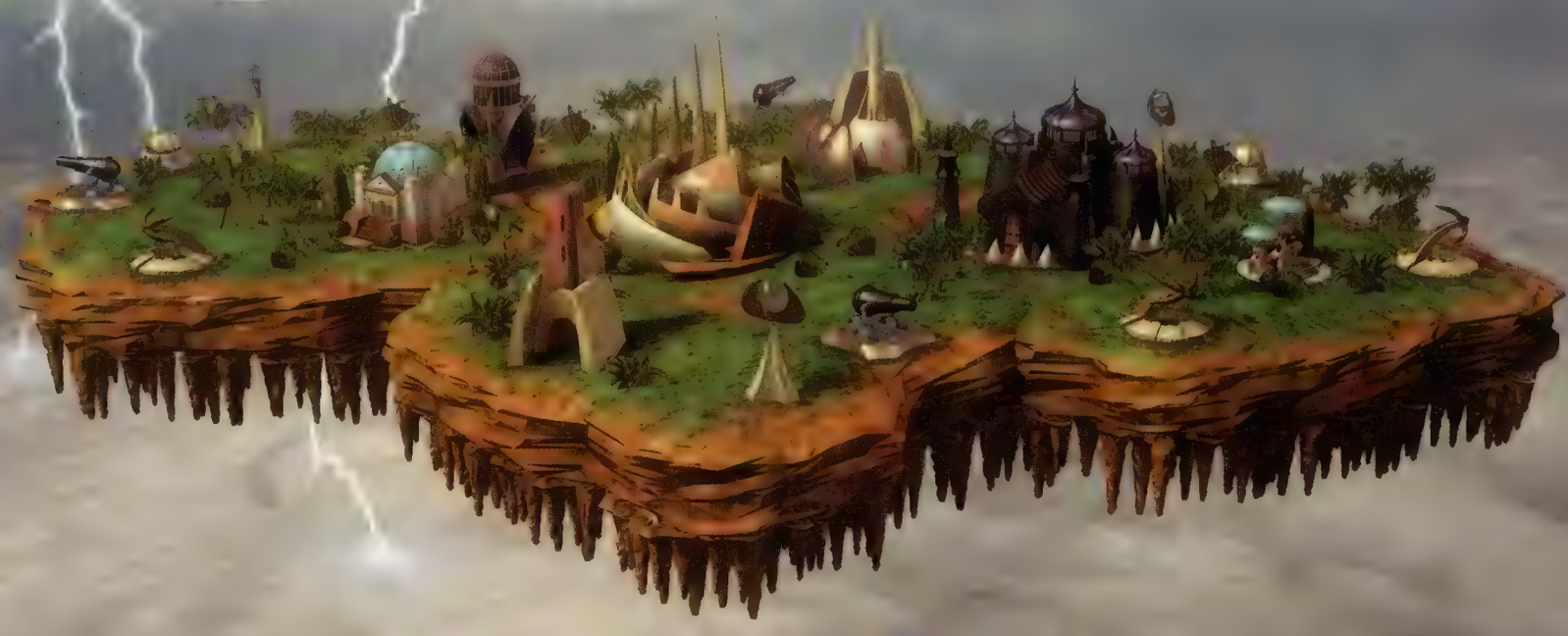
Category	Sports sim
Players	1-4 (same computer)
Publisher	EA Sports
Price	$TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now
For	Excellent animation of players and captures what's good about AFL and captures it beautifully. Real teams, real players, realistac stats. It's bloody fantastic!
Against	No TCP/IP play. No network play. No modem play. This is just about the only bad thing I can think of.
Need	p100, 16MRam, 2xCD, 70MbHDD, DirectX5, Win95
Want	P133, 32MBRam, 4xCD, control pad

Plus



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NETSTORM

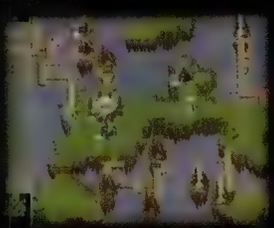
ISLANDS AT WAR

"Netstorm seems poised to redefine and reinvigorate both real-time and network-based gaming for some time to come." - **COMPUTER GAMES ENTERTAINMENT**

"You have to see it to believe it."- **COMPUTER AND NET PLAYER**

As Islands clash in 22 single-player missions, strategic thinking and unit placement become as critical as unit firepower.

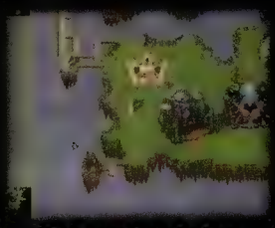
A revolutionary game design ensures no lag eight player battles, effortless player matching and true alliances. Each battle counts and each victory increases your island's ranking in the next furious encounter.



Set up a fortress away from home with a strategically placed outpost warstation.



An enemy Priest, the ultimate war trophy in Netstorm.



The sacrificial altar where enemy priests take their last breath.

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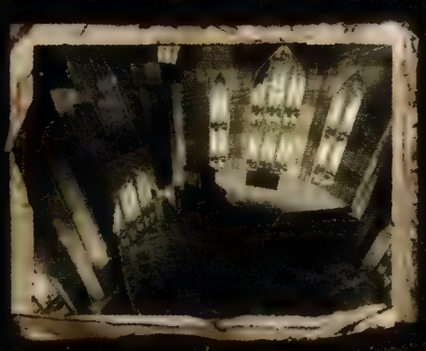
HEXEN II

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

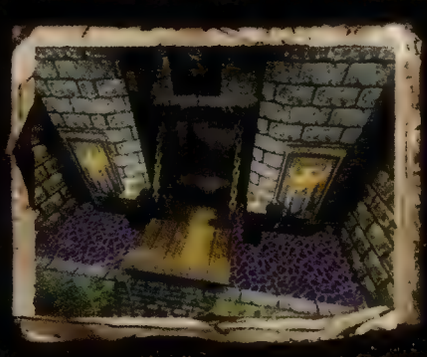




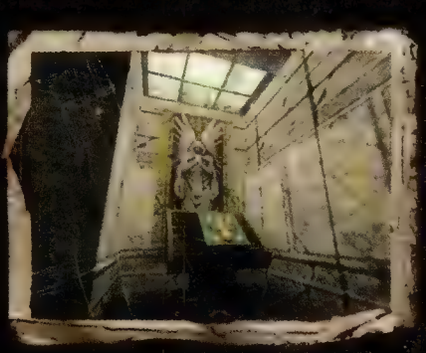
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TOMB RAIDER II: The dagger of Xian

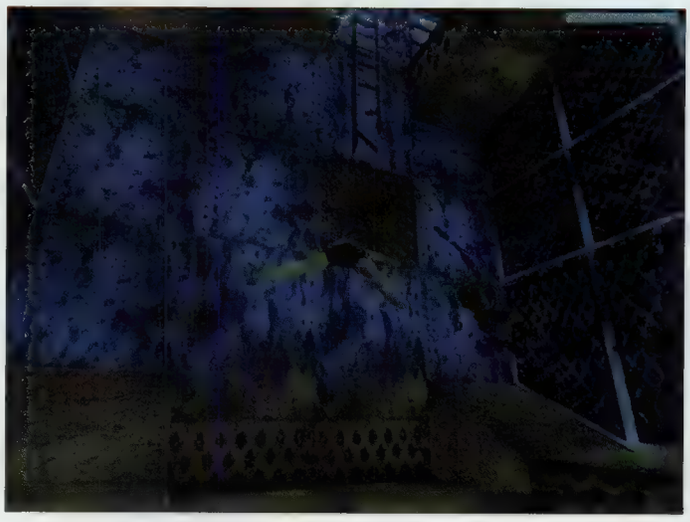
Uzis out lads, Lara's back.

We gamers are a sentimental lot. Give us one beautiful moment in gaming history, and we long to recapture it. Tomb Raider was one of those games that many of us sit back and remember with a deep smile. Love the rest of the game or not, when you and Lara first set eyes on each other, and you guided her about in the stunning 3D environment, was a special moment. But for us to get a similar kind of experience from a sequel, the developers really have to push at reinventing the first. To keep the essence of the game intact, yet make it fresh.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That's a pretty simple formula that unfortunately ends up turning even the most enjoyable pastime into tripe. How many of you remember when Hey Hey it's Saturday was a witty show? It was, we're sure of it, at one time, entertaining. But it's been done before, over and over. Really, does anyone remember why people boo Red anymore? Do we care, is it still funny? With games, the shelf life is incredibly shorter. Old is a game couple of months down the track. Tomb Raider II is almost exactly like Tomb Raider, with a couple of minor new features. So much so that it's a bit of a disappointment. It's just after the power of the first Lara adventure, it's a little too easy to expect another jaw dropper.

Massive breast job

Well, let's take a look at these new features. And who better to



(above) Ahhh...Eidos really know how to use their camera angles
(below) None of this sniping, strafing nonsense, no, Lara stands her ground and opens fire. Combat in Tomb 2 really is poor





Lara in profile with an M-16. If only she could turn a bit faster, combat would be much more manageable



Plus

www.tombraider.com All the usual crap, but with links to pages dedicated to Lara - there's something for all those lovers of polygonal curves!

start this off than with Lara herself? Well, by golly gee! We all expected that money and fame would have gotten to Lara, and that a treat to a massive breast job is in order. Thankfully, Lara realised that things that size can get in the way of serious adventuring, so she got a reduction instead! Yay Lara! She's also got a new wardrobe! A skin tight wetsuit, a new bomber jacket, and a couple of other minor variations on the theme. Bah. Who cares? She can now climb some vertical surfaces, and shoot underwater. Lara can also now ride other vehicles, like a speed boat through Venice (part of solving a puzzle requires it). She also wades through water now, which while realistic, is painfully slow. Generally though, nothing big or major that ruins gameplay - nor anything that really enhances it.





Pretty girl with guns in tight outfit. Cool game character or shameless marketing device? You decide!

One thing that was sorely missed in Tomb Raider 2 was that jaw dropping element of the first Tomb Raider. Remember the very first time you jumped out of the water in the Colosseum level in Tomb Raider? Watching the stunning visuals smoothly scroll into view? The first level of TR2 has a very strong TR feel - a cavern, some water, and some ledges to scale. The next level features some rather sexy textures and a very Venetian feel. The underwater ship levels look awesome, as do most of the levels. Though nothing of the jaw-droppingly good quality of the first. There are large open areas, and just as many closed areas with low ceilings as well. All 16 levels are much larger than the anything seen in the first TR (except the first level), and they're all great in design - just not brilliant, or magic, or drool inducing. A massive effort has been put into the levels, but really, if you've seen Tomb Raider, you've seen it all before.

Painful combat

Combat is something that's a bit more a of a hassle in Tomb Raider 2, and it's virtually identical to the original. In the first, you shot at a couple of animals at a time at most, and generally had little problem dispatching



Let's play dress-up Lara. Love the swimmers! And that wool-lined ranger jacket is to die for!



them - your medikits ended up healing trap damage more than they did animal bites and scratches. The Dagger of Xian however, features more enemies with big sticks and things that go pop trying to stop you reaching the prized butter knife. So much so in fact, that combat with others is virtually found around ever corner in some levels! Some of you may be asking "Yeah, more things to kill, why you complaining?", but it's not that simple. Lara, although fluid in just about every other aspect (er, control I mean), is a dog to handle in combat. It was never a big hassle in TR because it was more a spice to the general exploring theme of the game. You could forgive it just because everything else was so good. With more enemies, you get more combat situations, and thus more moments of frustration. Frustration as you get little room to manoeuvre around, and Lara, as nimble as she can be, can't handle turning around on the spot too well. This is my biggest annoyance. If Lara moved better, then shooting people wouldn't be too bad. The enemies are tougher now, too many in number, and just damned tricky to take out. Couple this with a rather limited supply of medikits, the focus of the game changes from a game of exploration, puzzle solving, and trap mastering, to one more of combat and escaping these with enough health.

More like a mission pack

Ultimately, Tomb Raider II, feels too much like a mission pack or expansion disk than anything else. The only things that really sets it apart is the fact that it has the size of a full length game, and that the levels are larger. Other than that, it offers nothing spectacularly new. That's not to say that Tomb Raider II isn't a blast of the game. Actually, it's much more of that great action adventuring through some greatly designed levels (not brilliant mind you). It'll challenge, frustrate, and captivate you. Put it this way - if you enjoyed Tomb Raider in anyway, then you'll get plenty of enjoyment out of the sequel. Apart from a few new moves (and ways of moving), a bit more of a solid storyline, and larger levels, Tomb Raider 2 is Lara in a bunch of new levels with a different (yet still remarkably similar in the adventure department) storyline and not much else. Personally, I'd love to have seen a much higher level of interaction with the environment. - some a little like Duke 3D. Okay, so you can hop in speed boats and the like, but the world is pretty much look - don't touch. If, like most people, you expected the same kind of giddy excitement you got running around in those underground levels of the original to be repeated this time around, you will be let down. If you're looking for more Lara, in more skimpy outfits, doing more Indiana Jones style adventuring, then Tomb Raider 2 is going to give you a damn great gaming time.

March Stepnik



GO HOME WITH LARA





Remember that massive house in TR? The one that you used to help master your control of Lara? It was Lara's it was. She's had massive renovations, and left a few doors open. More a prequel level (or level 0) than anything else, Eidos have really poured in a bit of thought in helping the newcomer get used to Lara in an interesting way. Rather than a few well placed crates and a rather dry tutorial, you start outside, at the beginning of an obstacle course. Lara will again talk you through the course, but rather than going off and starting the game with a sound knowledge of the bare Lara essentials, you can actually work at becoming the master Lara controller. The course is timed, and with multiple paths through (under, over, etc), you can work at really pushing Lara to the limits and beating your best course time. There's a hedge maze, fountain, indoor swimming pool, as well a much larger house in general (and it actually looks like the one in TR). There are also locked doors, keys, and rather (we wish) elaborate lingerie closets...





86%

Category	Action/Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Eidos
Price	STBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

For Lara, sequel to Tomb Raider, and a beautiful challenge

Against Not much different - too similar to Tomb Raider. Combat really should have been different, since this game focuses more on this - another negative

Need Pentium, 8Mb RAM, 2xCD

Want P166 or 3Dfx, 16Mb RAM

Man of War

"Man of War petitions those aspects of battle many wargames are still dreaming of properly addressing."
Computer Game Entertainment Magazine

"Man of War could be the Horatio Nelson of age of sail games."
Computer Gaming World Magazine

"The graphics are phenomenal!"
PC Gamer Magazine







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INCUBATION: Time is running out

It's new! It's fresh! It's different! It's not a Real Time Strategy Game! Woo hoo!

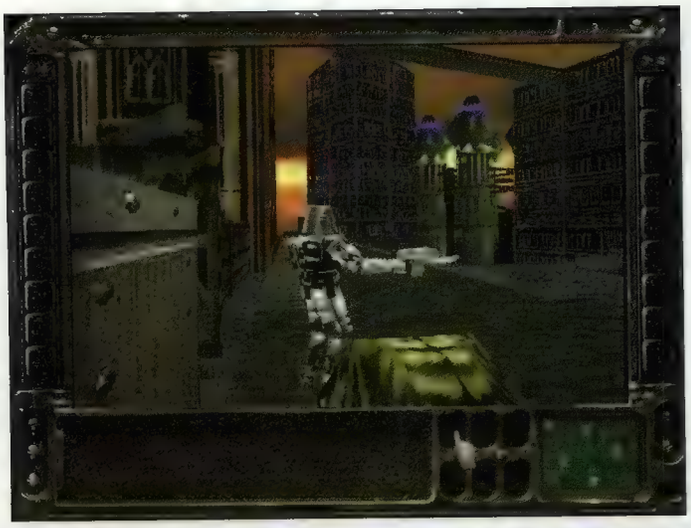




Don't let the title fool you - Incubation gives you plenty of time to work a strategy out. (above) the numbered circles give possible movement options, and how many movement points are required

The real-time strategy genre has been the big thing for the past year or so. Well, actually, ever since C&C and Warcraft 2 hit it big, RTS has been the hot genre. Since then we've had a host of follow ups - some have been decent, some have been crass attempts to cash in on the genre's popularity, and some have been stunningly good additions, such as Age Of Empires, Dark Reign and Total Annihilation. There does come a point in a gamers life though, when they may feel inclined to get just a little tired of RTS games - as good as they may be, variety is still the spice of life, and games.

Rejoice then, for Bluebyte have turned their back on the RTS genre, and brought out a turn based strategy game rich with cutting edge graphics, atmospheric, challenging, addictive gameplay, and plenty of gory body parts flying about the place to boot. It's the next in Bluebyte's Battle Isle series, which, while it was fairly popular over Europe way, never really gained the attention of the gamers here. In our considered position, the Battle Isle series (up until now) was never very interesting - blocky graphics, crappy AI, silly hexagon map squares, and all sorts of other stuff made it a game to be left alone, or given as a gift to a niece or nephew you didn't really like. Incubation is more than just head and shoulders above the others in the Battle Isle series - it's a whole body above them (if you know what I mean).







Multiple viewpoints are available - including 1st person & through the eyes of your enemy

Plot, schmot

Though the game is a very good one, the storyline is just a little silly. It's kind of a 50's B-grade sci-fi movie plot (without the camp performances and anti-commie undertones) mixed in with lashings of Alien style monsters. You're in control of a group of space marines who are called in to the planet Scayra when all hell breaks loose. Why has all hell broken loose? Well, you see the humans were there to mine it or colonise it or something, but they didn't particularly want to mix with the existing inhabitants, so they constructed an energy field to keep the aliens out and the humans in (actually, maybe there is a little bit of a subtext to the plot...).

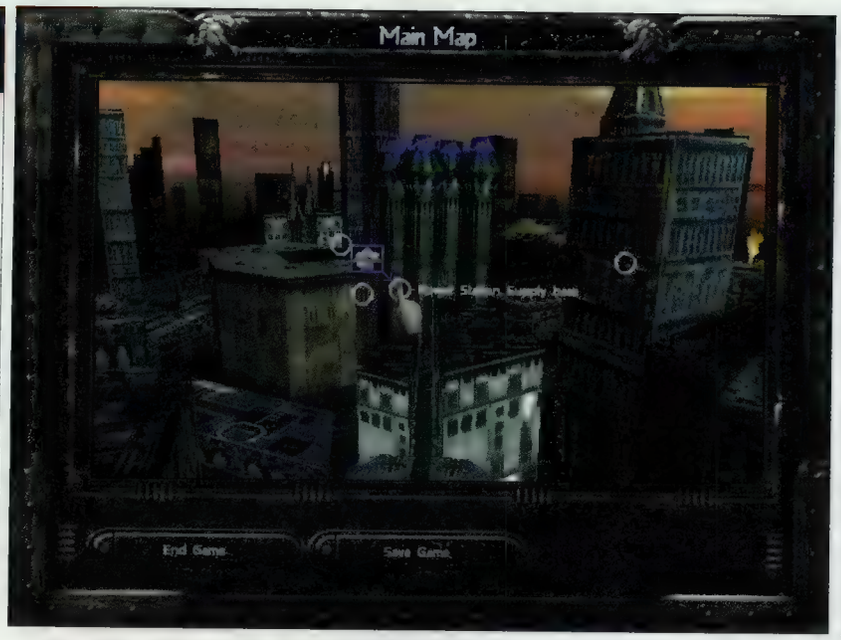
Needless to say, things don't work out quite as well as the humans had hoped. Their energy field thingy goes down (for unspecified reasons) and the aliens begin to mix with the humans. Now, at first, this is not a terrible thing - you're given the impression that initially the Scay'Ge (pronounced 'skaygar') are nice furry friendly little creatures. But when the Scay'Ge become infected with a human virus (again, an unspecified one), they turn into a killing machine, replete with dripping fangs, a menacing waddle, and every other nasty alien beastie quality. So, rather than apologise to these aliens who have a) had their planet invaded by the humans, and b) been infected with a human virus as a result and turned into very nasty creatures that not even their mothers could love - rather than say sorry and try to fix the problem the humans decide it might be a good idea to leave the planet, go back home and try to pretend the whole thing never happened.

The only problem is that the Scay'Ge are starting to run rampant over the station, killing, maiming and generally feasting on peoples intestines wherever they go. So, some big important person decides to throw in a troop of space marines as bait to hopefully keep the Scay'Ge busy whilst everyone else runs away as fast as they can. Which is where you come in. So the deal is that your team is expendable, and your mission is to die heroically while everyone else acts like a coward, which is of course what you're paid to do when you're a space marine. Needless to say, the odds are stacked against you, no-one expects you to get your team out alive, so your marines are force to wave a teary goodbye to their loved ones, and after one final cuddle of their teddy bears for good luck, it's off to face almost certain death at the hands of the Scay'Ge.

Innovative gameplay

That's the story behind the game, but what about the game itself? Well, it's based on the very impressive Extreme Assault engine, and in a rather nice touch, you can switch the point of view around to almost any angle, including the perspective of one of your marines, a top down map view, and even see things from the Scay'ge's perspective when it's their turn to move. It's really quite cool, and very atmospheric. Once you've finished your turn, the point of view switches to the alien beasties and you watch them move from either a first person Quake-type perspective or a top down isometric view. So when you have some of your men set for reaction fire, you watch through the Scay'Ge eyes as they walk around a corner smack bang into the barrel of your guy's weapon, and then explode into a mess of blood, body parts and intestines in a rather nice display of gratuitous gore.





Upgrade, update, and outfit your forces in the latest and greatest. "Advanced Combat Gun? I like the sound of that! Gimme three!"



In terms of gameplay though, Incubation is slightly different to most other turn based games. For starters, the maps are comparatively small and your troops have around 3 or 4 movement points each turn (either for shooting, moving or saving for reaction fire). What this means is that each step you make your marines take becomes very important, so much so that at times in the campaign mode Incubation most closely resembles a game of Chess or Go. Add to this the firepower available to you, and things get even more intricate and intense. Each weapon can fire only about 4 shots in a row before it starts to overheat, and also occasionally jams up, so running into an alien infested area and indiscriminately shooting anything that moves is not such a good idea.

Off with their heads!

Because of this, each movement, each shot, each item used, has to be carefully thought out, and sometimes the only way to get through a situation is from the 'save and restore and try again' approach - which is a bit of a downer, but at least it's not too easy. The enemy AI is quite challenging too, and different types of Scay'Ge have different attributes. For example, one type of Scay'Ge has bloody good frontal armour, but none on its back, and can only move a couple of paces each turn. So to kill them, you need to get some members of your team to lure the Scay'Ge towards them while sneaking around behind it with some other troops. It's not quite as easy as it might sound though, they know their weaknesses and will try to protect them. This type will try to keep it's back to the wall as much as possible, and if the troops sneaking up behind get too close or are too obvious, it'll about-face and snip their heads off.

And then there's the RPG elements in addition to all the other cool stuff. Each troop member gains in experience as they progress, allowing them access to better weapons and equipment, and 'equipment points for extra items can be found in crates uncovered along the way too. Just some of the pieces of equipment that become available include stimulant packs (for a quick burst of movement), bigger guns (with an increased AP cost), better armour, scanners, medical kits and so on. Nothing really new in this, apart from the names of the guns, but they all are such that each addition to your soldiers armoury needs to be carefully weighed up - just like almost every other aspect of this game.



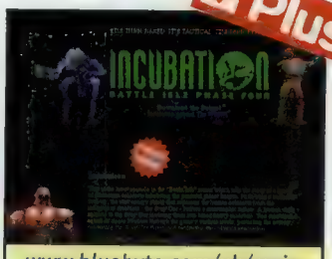
Multiplayer Anal-retentiveness

Then there's the multiplayer experience, and I'm happy to say that Bluebyte have actually paid attention to the multiplayer aspects, which makes a very nice change. The usual options are in place, with TCP/IP play, IPX, serial connections, and so on - but there's also the option for PBEM (play by email), which is not something seen in many games today. Multiplayer is all about up to four teams trying to kill each other, there's no co-operative mode against the aliens, it's just troop against troop. There is a huge variety of different troops available though (see inset), and at the start an amount of money is made available to each player to recruit these troops. So while one player might go for a lightly armoured fast scout troop with back up snipers, someone else might go for a heavily armoured and slow troop with BFG's. As with single play, multiplayer is just as intricate in it's execution. Each player takes one turn - moves one unit only, and then it's on to the next player, and as silly as that might sound, it works really well (though for PBEM play the whole troops is moved in one turn). It's really almost a different game - the basics are the same, but it's more than just playing against humans rather than AI, mission objectives can be assigned (ie take a certain number of points nominated on the map, injure 60% of the enemy troops, and so on).

All up, it's a fairly unique (big word of the week: oxymoron) game, and it's not going to appeal to everyone. If people tend to call you disparaging things like an 'anal retentive bastard' (as they do to me regularly. Thanks Ben.), then Incubation is made for you (and me). Don't be discouraged if you tend to get frustrated with these types of things though, it's balanced well enough to make it a very worthwhile experience. All up, Incubation is something different, it's very well constructed, and I heartily recommend it.

Gareth Jones

Plus



www.bluebyte.com/uk/main.html

84%

Category	Turn-based strategy
Players	1-4
Publisher	Bluebyte software
Price	$89.95
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now

For Intricate turn based strategy game with 3Dfx graphics option, put together very well. An attempt to do something new with the genre/s, which works admirably. Has PBEM option (yay!).

Against Can be hard to select units occasionally because of pointer. Units can only be selected once per turn, and a few more multiplayer maps would have been nice

Need P90, 16Mb RAM, 2Mb video card, 4 x CD, Win 95

Want 3Dfx-based accelerator, 32Mb RAM

As a G-Police officer, you'll be charged with causing death by reckless flying and assault with a deadly weapon. Then you'll be promoted.



IN LAW, WE TRUST

www.gpolice.com

PSYGNOSIS

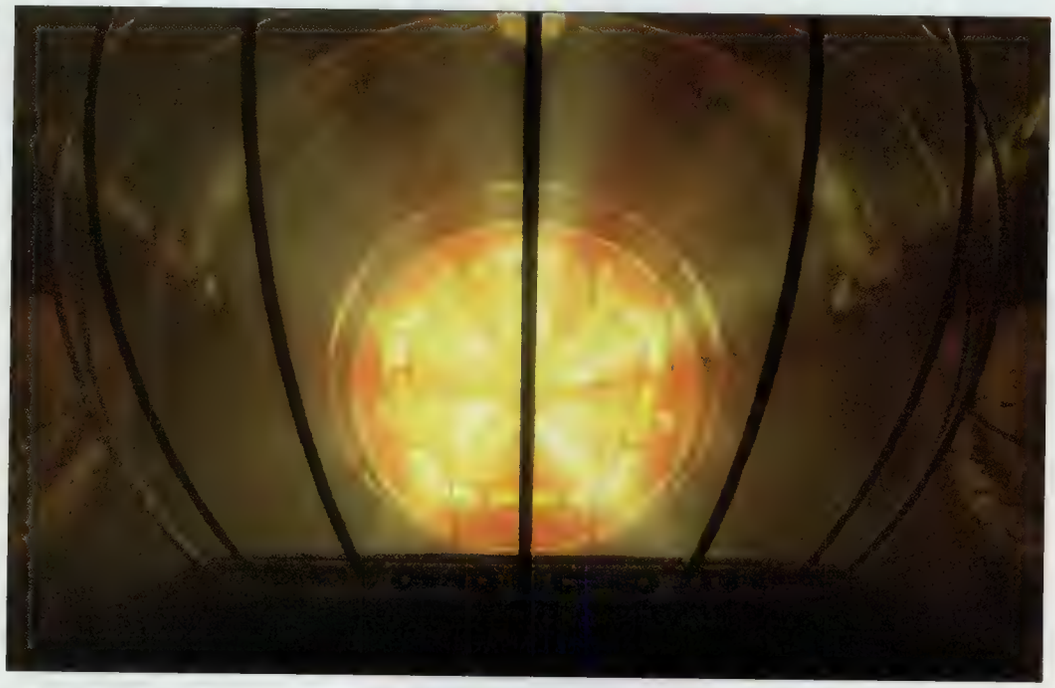
PC CD ROM

SONY PlayStation

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RIVEN

The era of static-screen adventuring is far from over. With moving parts at a minimum, Riven proves that style and substance can carry a game all the way.

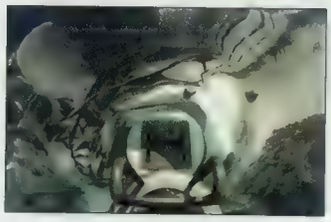




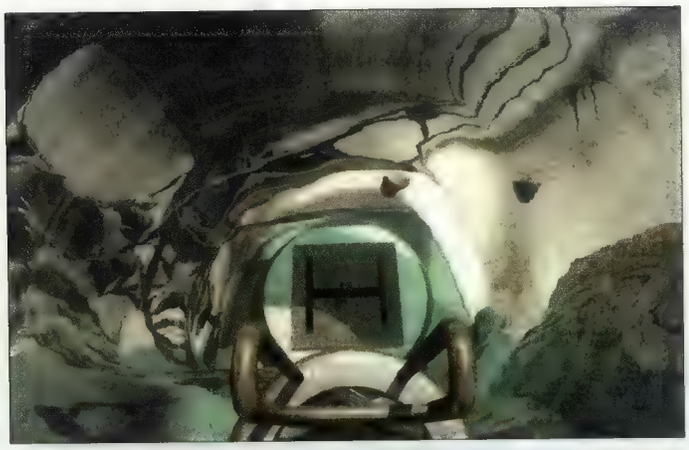
Myst has sold 3.5 million copies worldwide (and still selling) across a multitude of platforms. 3.5 million is an important milestone - it's the top selling game of all time (to put in perspective, Lara and her outfit sold about 1.8 million). It continued to dominate the charts even after umpteen months in them. I, however, was not one of the 3.5 million people that went out and got a copy. Nor was I friend, family member, acquaintance or even stranger that played through with someone that had a copy. The only things I saw of Myst were the box, a few screenshots in the press, and maybe an ad or two on tv. That was it. I'm not ashamed of that either. Expectations as to the sequel of Myst? I have none. Forget the hype, forget the sales figures, underneath all that marketing lies the final product that'll speak for itself. It's a game, and as a devout player, all I'm looking for is something that will hold my attention, make me smile, and give me a real sense of satisfaction when (and if) I finally finish it.

Myst - an obvious sequel

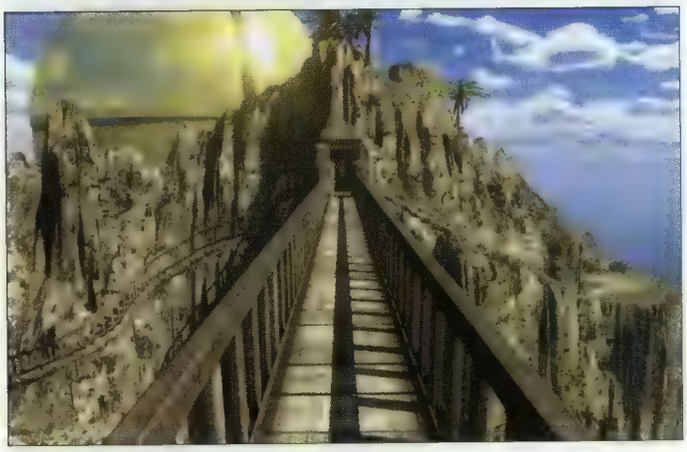
I'd heard a bit about Myst. The thing I most remembered was the difficulty. Most people found it frustratingly hard - puzzles that made no sense and bordered on inanity. People also found Myst to be mind-numbingly boring. That clicking around an island made up of still screens, no matter how good they looked, was just not very exciting. Riven is more of the same. In fact, many of the people that played Myst and got a brief look at Riven called it a prettier looking Myst - an obvious sequel. Naturally, those that need the action fix or want something much more obvious, can look elsewhere because the creators (in the truest sense of the word) of Riven have kept the appearance of Riven very much like that of Myst. Technically, they're very similar. The biggest difference with Riven is that there's much more animation, live action sequences, and these are now full screen rather than in a small window. Those expecting new 3D action features and the like will also be disappointed in this way. That's not to say that Riven is a flop, nor the result of too much money, too much time, and too much success. On the contrary - Riven is a beautiful experience. A beautiful experience for many reasons too. In fact, I've totally fallen in love with Riven. I'm your typical red-blooded gamer; I love action, blasting things to bits and generally causing mayhem and destruction. Riven is the antithesis of this. It's tranquil, peaceful, alive. Perhaps because the elements of destruction, danger and doom are so naturally and skilfully interwoven within the envi-



It's more than just a sequel. Much, much better

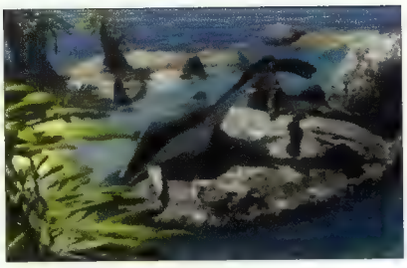






It's made up of mostly static images, but they are beautifully done, and don't mean that you won't become immersed at all

ronment and visuals, all my bombastic desires are satisfied. Maybe not, but the thing that stands out about Riven is exactly that. Riven is mostly made up of static visuals. Click on something, and a small animation may be executed (like the turning of a valve). Even though it's essentially a collection of screens, the island feels alive. It feels grand in scope, and even more so in purpose. How can this be so? Well, the design of the world is superb. There's machinery scattered all over the island - some still functional, some in ruins. Some people operate these too. Yes! One of the biggest differences with Riven is that the island is actually inhabited by living things (humans too!). Not so much to change the experience, 'cause most of Riven is still wondering about in solitude. The inhabitants though give the island much more of an organic feel.



Audio visual magic

Most of the magic of Riven comes across in the sound and visuals. Enough so that Cyan recommend you have a decent sound setup, as well as correct monitor settings (a quick self test diagnostic is included in the setup program). Funny that, because I played my first bit of Riven on the Super PC PowerPlay computer (situated in a location so secret that everyone must be drugged and blindfolded to be allowed entry), and I was completely impressed. Taking it home to my P150 with 14 inch monitor and relatively crappy speakers the sense of grandeur was somewhat diminished. Same could be said for most games, but with Riven this is much more important due to the fact that it relies on visuals and sound for its appeal. Bigger is better, but thankfully smaller isn't worse. If you have a system like mine then don't look at it on something better, unless of course that something better is where you'll finish playing it.

I found Riven fairly easy to get into. I wandered about for about half an hour the first time and gave up, simply because I had my mindset that I must tackle it with a highly critical and logical approach. Wrong! Get into it, get a feel of the architecture and man made designs of the game, and you'll start to uncover the secrets of the game, and actually get somewhere. By this, I'm not saying that Riven is a walk in the park. Never! There's still heaps of wondering around lost, and to combat this, Riven allows less linear gameplay. There's much more to see (this is a 5 CD game). The only disappointing thing worth mentioning is that Riven still uses the old point and click interaction routine. Pity there's nothing new yet because pointing and clicking relentlessly at everything on screen is always going to hamper developers attempts at providing a truly immersive experience.

Discovery and understanding

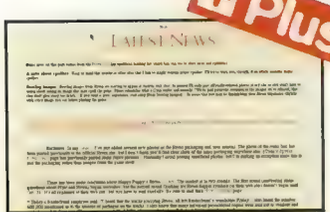
And that's what Riven is. It's an immersive experience. It's a game, just like Chess is a game and life is a game. It's not loaded with action packed sequences and things going boom. It's a great story of discovery and understanding. It's a total credit to the creators; Riven is a masterpiece. Riven seems alive, and a game that can suck you in and give you that sense of realism, is definitely worth looking at. It's also thoroughly satisfying adventure. I recommend it, though not to everyone. For obvious reasons.

March Stepnik

PC PowerPlay GOLD 90%

Category	Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Cyan/Red Orb
Price	$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	Riven has the grand feel about it - a sense of history and future about it that transcends the moments when you play it. In other worlds, it's a solid fantasy world. Looks stunning.
Against	It's the sequel to Myst, and it feels like Myst. This is enough to turn people off. Other than that, it has some fairly high recommended specs.
Need	P100, 16MB RAM, Win 95, 4xCD-ROM.
Want	32 MB RAM, 20 inch monitor, a PC PowerPlay Hot Hardware Guide recommended speaker kit with sub woofer.

Plus



http://members.aol.com/MystSequel/new.html

A great unofficial site that documents the blood sweat and tears that went into the making of Riven (which is an adventure in itself).

DARK EARTH

Printed screenshots don't do this game justice. Make sure you take a close look at this one the first chance you get.

Dark Earth is the story of Arkhan, a young man of Stallite Sparta. The Stallites are the cities that grew around the few remaining places on Earth where the Sun's rays still reached down to the ground. After the comet arrived and bombarded the planet with thousands of fragments most life, and light, was wiped out. The few survivors gathered and built cities around the places of light and also began to worship it.

Society in Stallite Sparta is divided into various castes: the Sunseers are the priests of the sun God and the keepers of technological and medical knowledge - Arkhan's father is a Sunseer. The Guardians of Fire are the Sunseers strong arm, their bodyguards and law enforcers. The Builders are the workers and craftsmen oddly enough, the Providers are the farmers and food suppliers and the Scavengers basically do everything else!

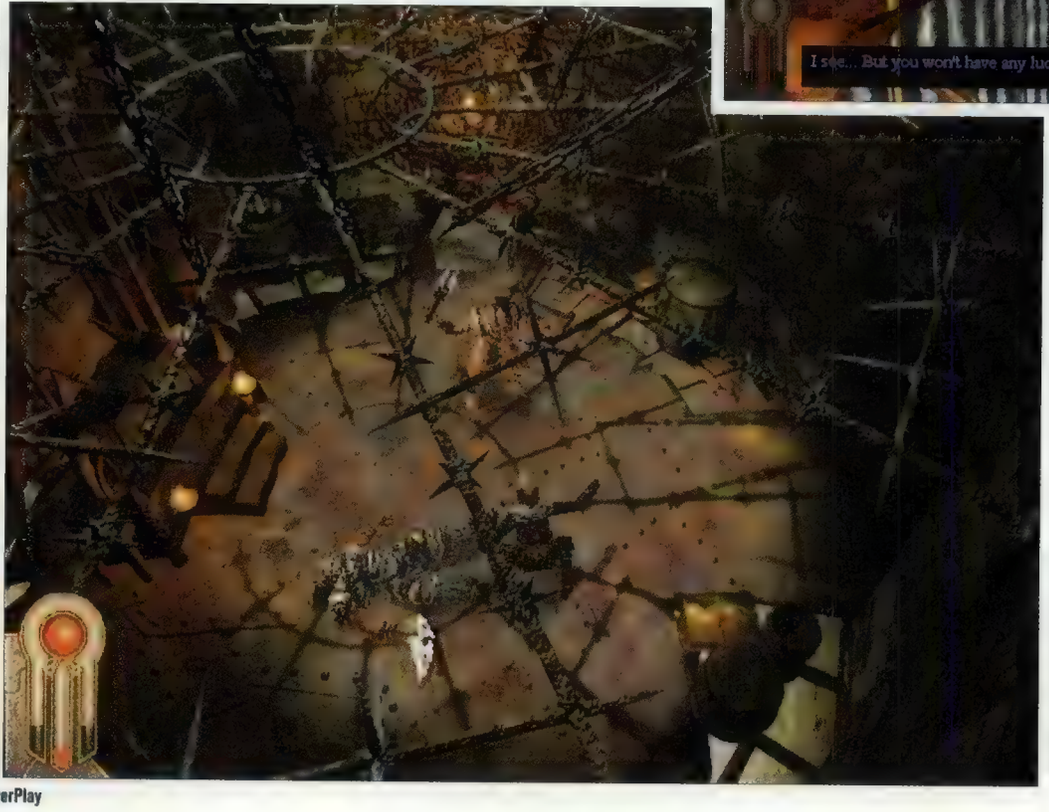
Arkhan, your alter ego in the game, is a Guardian of Fire - having chosen not to follow in his fathers footsteps as a Sunseer. He's a bit of a dropout you see, and he's involved with a woman of lower caste which is always a bit of a no no in Spartan society. The game starts out with you being assigned guard duty for a council meeting. Something goes horribly wrong and you are poisoned with a vile slow acting drug that alters your appearance and is slowly turning you into a creature of the dark (ominous music cue here) Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to find a cure for this mysterious poison and to save the Stallite from a plot to destroy its source of light and life.





It's French, an adventure, and against all odds, damn good!





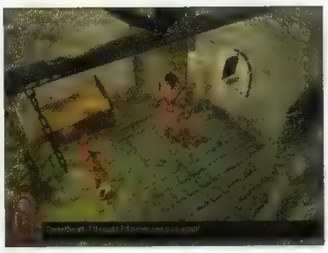
Tomb Fighter

From here on in Dark Earth just gets better and better! Imagine a cross between Tomb Raider, Virtua Fighter and one of those beautiful French comic books by the likes of Moebius or Geroud and you'll have an inkling as to what this game is all about. It plays like a console game, looks like a 3D PC game and has the depth of a good novel, what more could any action adventure lover ask for?

Visually the game encompasses over 5000 animations, 25 minutes of 32k colour video and very tasty light sourcing and shadowing effects. There are over one hundred objects and weapons to use and an equal number of NPC's. But because the developers have chosen to use painted



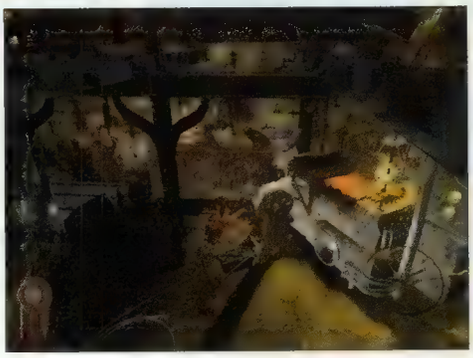
With hand painted backgrounds, you get stunning visual variety. It's just not 3D though...







(above) No, that's not a cucumber in my pocket, I'm just really glad to see you (right) In the future, blacksmiths will work with bike wheels



backgrounds instead of rendered ones the game will run smoothly on even modest systems. The only work your PC has to do is move the characters around.

As you can see from the screenshots, the perspective is from the third person, a-la Tomb Raider. Your character has a lot more moves though, combat moves! There are two ways that combat can be set up, automatic and manual. In auto all that's required is a tap on the control key and your character will make the most appropriate move given your opponents distance away and stance. In manual you can control the type of blow by using the control key in conjunction with the arrow keys. There aren't any heart stopping leaps and bounds or blocks to play with however, this is more traditional adventure game fare.

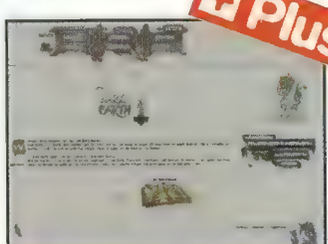
Virtual moods

You also have another way of controlling how Arkhan interacts with his surroundings (well you don't want to bash everything do you?) He has moods! In his light mood Arkhan will be able to talk in a civil manner with townsfolk, frolic among the flowers and listen to the Wiggles. But in his dark mood he'll grumble and groan and generally be unpleasant, which can come in handy for interrogating prisoners and starting fights in pubs. Talking about interfaces, this wouldn't be an adventure game without an inventory and Dark Earth's works very well indeed. It is divided into two sections: Weapons and Items and any item can be given a 'hot key' number by just highlighting it and hitting one of your number keys! Like Tomb Raider the interface is designed with the keyboard player in mind but If you're lucky enough to have a Microsoft Sidewinder pad (or some other pad, but the Sidewinder is the best) then Dark Earth will support it very nicely. It's actually the best way to play the game in my humble opinion.

Without wanting to give too much away Dark Earth has all the hallmarks of a great game. It breaths new life into a decaying genre, it has well written dialogue and atmosphere so thick you can put it under people escaping from burning buildings. Adventure game fans should truly love this game, it's the closest thing I've come to playing an interactive novel, even more so than Final Fantasy VII. All I can say is get it!

George Soropos

Plus



Dark Earth was developed by a French company called Kalisto. Their site can be found at www.kalisto.com and is devoted to their two big upcoming titles: Dark Earth and Ultimate Race. For those of you that also own PSX's (there must be a couple) Kalisto also developed the excellent Nightmare Creatures for that platform.

PC PowerPlay GOLD 91%

Category	Action adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Microprose
Price	$89.95
Rating	TBA
Available	Now
For	Immersive, atmospheric and intriguing!
Against	Save points can be a bore but that's about it.
Need	P90, 16 Mb RAM, 4XCD, Win 95
Want	P150, 32 Mb RAM, 16XCD

TAKE NO PRISONERS

All hail the top-down, single dude of death action shooter. Classic gameplay and graphics to keep you warm at night.

Rumour has it that World War III was started purely by accident. A slightly tipsy Boris Yeltsin visiting the Russian nuclear launch facility was bad enough. The Generals only got extremely concerned when he started dancing the Macarena, dressed only in a set of "Vodka -It Rules" pyjamas. The last major event of world significance then came down to old Boris finishing up with a swing of the hips and an accidental recital of the nuclear launch codes. While the Macarena had been as predicted by many, responsible for the end of the world, the citizens of San Antonio Texas managed to survive... if only just. Various radiation induced creatures and subcultures segregated themselves into protective zones within the city, all competing for survival and a nice place to call home. A mysterious blue glowing dome has appeared in city central, and it seems that it might hold the secret for long term survival in this mutant hell hole. Problem is that every gang in the city holds a small piece of the puzzle in gaining entry to the dome. Only a post apocalyptic commando armed with assault weapons, and trained in 280 ways to kill a mutant stands a chance. You're the man.

World gone mad

While all this kicking some booty in a world gone mad is prime material for another Doom clone, Take No Prisoners takes literally a different angle. All the action is viewed from above, allowing you to see your soldier and his immediate LOS front and center. I was expecting a very flat looking environment with this viewpoint, sort of like Gauntlet fancied up but a 3D landscape has been implemented. You can sniper from on top of balconies, operate elevators and even fly the odd missile laden flying jet bike. System requirements for this new style of game engine are unexpectedly heavy, with a good quality 3D card necessary for 640x480 play (looks nice too), but 320x200 looks better than expected and does the job. The one down note is the inability to gain a long range view of the action. You can zoom the bird's eye camera to three levels, but even on the highest setting your soldier's view is too cramped which results in combat being always in your face. While this keeps everything at a frantic pace, combat would have been more satisfying if you could plan your attacks before a gang of gun wielding freaks appears five feet in front of you.











Things that survive Nuclear detonations: cockroaches, street gangs, rat-men and yuppies

While it isn't Quake 2 in technical terms, Take No Prisoners has a larger assortment of monsters and weapons than we are accustomed to in the average gun fest game. You start off with the usual shotty, but soon the thrills of laser cannons, death by electricity thingies and the flame thrower that is guaranteed to light up someone's life. While wasting enemy soldiers, hunting down cyborgs and slaying mad occultists is fun... you haven't lived until you rampage through the Yuppie zones. Laugh and be satisfied as these rich kids use their customized tennis rackets to serve portable black hole grenades at you, only to be vaporized/fried/sliced and diced with whatever you're shooting with at the time. Reliance on one weapon (no matter how attached and lovey dovey you feel towards it) is not recommended. After 100 rounds of Ak-47 fire, it became quickly apparent that the Rat-Men's resistance to bullets was in deep contrast to their highly flammable but cute little furry bodies.











Top dwon shooter with a wide and entertaining set of weaponry available. It's a winner!

Recomended musical accompaniment: Painters & Dockers- Die Yuppie Die



Non-linear blasting

Each of the twenty zones contains environments from universities and zoos up to radioactive sewer systems and a train station that is a mugger's paradise. A big thumbs up is the non-linear nature of the game. I never got stuck in one zone without the option of moving onto some other territory, a good thing considering the puzzles seems as tough as Raven's other game of the moment Hexen II. The idea behind the brain benders centers around your PDD (Personal Data Device). This handy little mobile computer lets you download and process info from computer terminals scattered around the city plus other PDD's belonging to enemies that you have dispatched. Gathering clues along the likes, of where is the secret key to the hidden base etc you are supposed to get closer to gathering the secret of the blue glowing dome. I admit to getting stumped once too often, and just enjoyed blasting my way from level to level.

Included for your gaming pleasure is multiplayer action on the Red Orb Zone. An Internet Battle Net type server, that allows for co-op and various deathmatch styles of play. Sadly it was a bit of a ghost town, and I could never find anyone to fight with, probably due to the game not being in wide release as yet. It could well be though that everyone is playing Quake to get their action thrills. This is the main concern with Take No Prisoners. A good quality game by any measure, but in the shadow of the arrival of next gen first person shooters it doesn't make a huge impact.

Pete Sharpe



81%

Category	Shoot-em-up
Players	1-8(LAN) 1-2(Modem, TCP/IP)
Publisher	Raven Software
Price	STBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now
For	Carnage, big guns and mutants. Duke would have his hands full here.
Against	Top down perspective is a nicely done, but with Quake 2 around the corner...
Need	P90, 16Mb RAM, WIN95.
Want	P133, 32Mb RAM, 3DFX card.

CART: Precision Racing

Another REALLY REALLY good Microsoft game... He came, he saw and damn did he conquer. Someone please tell Bill about consoles, that'd be fun to watch!

For some time now, Ben has been trying to convince me that racing games can only be played properly with a steering wheel controller. "It's the only way", he would say. "Once you've given it a go, you'll never be able to play without it again." Sure, of course, I replied. And went back to screaming around Monza in my keyboard-controlled Benetton.

Then, just last week, Microsoft's new Indycar game arrived, called (uh-huh) CART: Precision Racing. Accompanying Ben's offer for me to review it was another suggestion; that I give the steering wheel a chance. Alright, I said this time, and smuggled the huge thing home with me in a giant plastic bag. Look, I had to keep it secret, okay? This is an act of controller treachery, and I'm only now ready to go public with it.

Anyway, I hooked my new wheel up to my PC, installed CART, selected a Quick Race at Miami (a nice, simple, oval track - ha, or so I thought!), and found myself in the cockpit of a speedy red Indycar. Parade lap complete (a brilliant idea this, for three reasons - a) it feels right, it feels like a real race, b) it lets you get a look at the track, and so is useful for first-timers and a helpful reminder for veterans, and c) it allows you time to marvel at the visual splendour of the scenery because you don't actually control the car), I got the green flag and started racing. Normally in this sort of game I like to use the first corner to overtake as many cars as possible, nipping down the inside before outbraking my hapless opponents, or generally muscling my way in front. A similar manouevre here saw me lose control as soon as I moved from the racing line, the resulting spin put me into the wall and left me on the grass.



Vroom! Vroom! Screeech! Kaboom! Get used to it

It's hard

CART is a very, very difficult game. It's a simulation for people who dismissed Grand Prix 2 as a kiddies arcade game. After my ignominious exit from the race outlined above, I quickly made my way to the Driving Aids section and switched on spin correction, auto gears, traction control, anti-lock braking and no car damage. Back on the track I fared a little better, since I was now able to (mostly) keep my car heading in a straight line. When it came to turning a corner though, well, I tell you what, those outside walls can be very handy. After several laps of this I was nearly tempted to turn all



the driving aids on - I did try this much later actually, and was amused to discover that it left me with only a small degree of steering control, since everything else can be automated.

My inability to readily compete in a race (or even get a decent qualifying time) was not, as you may have been anticipating, due to inexperience with the new steering wheel. I experimented with the keyboard controls (and, improbably, found them even tougher) and then tried GP2 with the wheel for a bit of practice (and surprised myself with how easily I settled in). No, incompetence was not the problem. Persistence, however, is what is required, and with a large amount of this (i.e. about fifteen hours play over five days!) I was making significant improvements. I'm not yet at the stage where I'm ready to run through a championship season or even think about having a tinker with the car setup, but I can, for instance, complete several consecutive laps without crashing. Well, without any serious crashing, I mean to say.

Virtual mechanic

If CART wasn't quite so bloody difficult, I wouldn't hesitate in recommending it to anyone who adores racing simulations. Clearly, it has been lovingly developed (by the same people who did Monster Truck Madness, in fact). Presentation is slick and accessible with almost every game or racing feature available to be customised. Besides the heaven-sent driving aids, you can determine the realism level (basically setting which problems may afflict your car during a race), change the weather, alter what info is shown on your in-cockpit display, and enter the garage to adjust every detail of your car's setup (including an option to consult your engineer - you tell him the problem, say, too much oversteer, and he'll offer a suggestion after examining your setup - another brilliant idea).

And what would a racing sim be without never-ending options and stats screens









Better than GP2

The replay facility is identical to the one found in Monster Truck Madness. Which is a very good thing, because it is one of the best around. Camera placing is excellent and the VCR-style interface is simple to use. During the game, the plentiful camera views are worthwhile, too. Although, obviously, only the in-car view (and possibly the rear chase view as well) is of any practical use for driving. CART also shines with its graphics. Utilising your newly-purchased 3D graphics card, the game roars along at a perfect speed on a P100, even with all trackside objects and detail added. Non-3D card owners will have to make do with the nice hi-res look (without rear-view mirror or sky texturing) on a P133, or the still nice lo-res mode (again, without mirrors or the sky, and probably tyre effects as well) on a P100 or less. All up, though, it looks and runs markedly better than GP2 (the obvious game for comparison) on a compatible system.

Despite it being far too hard for any sane person (which may help explain why I like it), the only problem with CART is that it means that Microsoft have released yet another good game. After Monster Truck Madness, Age Of Empires, and now this, there are decreasingly few opportunities to make jokes about them. Damn.

David Wildgoose

And yes, for all you racing sim freaks out there, it *does* have a cockpit view mode



http://www.microsoft.com/games/precisionracing/cart/

84%

Category	Racing Sim
Players	1-8(LAN) 1-4(Net)
Publisher	Microsoft
Price	$79.95
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	Just an excellent all-round package. Looks good, sounds good, plenty of long-term challenge.
Against	Very tough. Definitely not for beginners.
Need	Pentium, 16Mb RAM
Want	P166, Direct 3D accelerator, and - yes! - a steering wheel.

SUB CULTURE

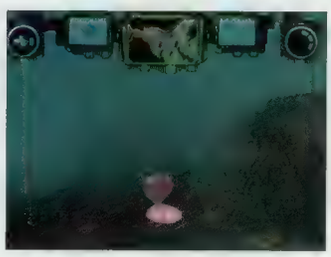
To do yet another sci-fi sub game is a brave thing these days. Most developers are scared of failing in this precarious genre. Faith is restored gamers, for at last we have a proper sci-fi subber!

Sub Culture is the latest title from the innovative bunch at Criterion Studios. Their previous game Scorched Planet took a modern slant to the Rescue on Fractalus theme and offered in-depth gameplay within a visually stunning 3D world. Continuing their tradition of high quality graphics and even higher quality levels of gameplay, Sub Culture takes you underwater into a totally unique world. Not unique because of its underwater habitat though, but unique because the game is centered around a miniature underwater ecosystem which co-exists with the human world. Within this miniature world you play the role of a little half inch "guy" that putts around in his sub privateering for 2 warring races.

Sub-plot

In Sub Culture, the humans are creating all sorts of chaos pumping toxic waste into the waterways choking and mutating your underwater world. For your people to survive you must stop the madness. However you can't do this alone, and all is not well in the octopus' garden beneath the waves. Your own people are not at harmony with one another and you must first stop two warring clans that are intent on exterminating the other. There are the Bohine, a very relaxed race who mould nature for their own purposes and the Prochas a much smaller more aggressive race who are in love with technology and will do anything to get what they want.

The nifty thing though is that

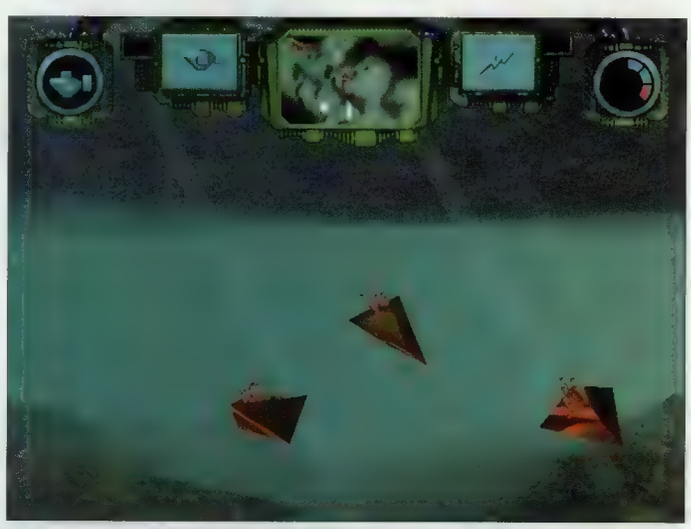


there is no pre-selection, the races within Sub Culture appear to be more defined by a way of thinking, rather then physical appearance. So as a mercenary/privateer you can be hired equally by both of them. It's actually this facet of Sub Culture that makes it so similar, yet so very different to games such as Privateer or Elite. Although essentially you need to trade to make money and accept missions to fulfill, a mission will only be offered if you have purchased (or have enough money to purchase) the necessary equipment on your sub. What this means is that you're constantly collecting items to trade accumulating enough wealth for future missions. This may seem tedious, but the means of making money in Sub Culture is both humorous and a ton of fun. Between missions you prospect different raw materials and take it to be sold at a refinery. This is no cakewalk and each mineral offers a new challenge as your sub can only have one type of extractor fitted at any given time.

If you have the Suck-o-matic, you can extract pearls from oysters or mine thorium by blowing it up and collecting the little pieces into your hold. Using the claw will allow you to pick up the thorium whole, but you have to tow it behind your sub.

Accurate handling

Here the implemented physics in the game engine come to life. Whilst towing the mineral, the





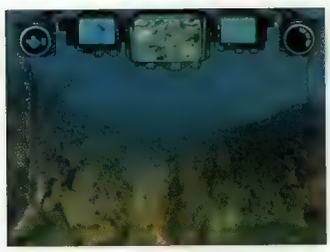
Underwater Elite, with turtles available for either transort or target practice

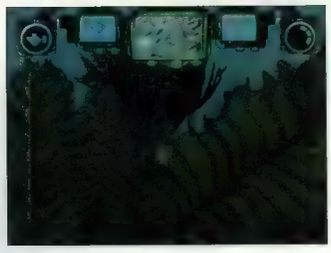






A very impressive and immersive world, with glorious graphics and excellent missions





(above) murky but realistic underwater textures

first thing you'll notice is that your sub receives a sudden reduction in speed and manoeuvrability. Also, if you're not careful, the thorium can get stuck between rocks and put a sudden stop to your travels. Attaching a magnet to your sub will also allow you to tow back coins dropped by the humans or milk bottle lids.

The Missions in Sub Culture are really varied and add immense enjoyment to the game. There is the occasional "guard this" from invaders, where you stand your ground and fight. But there are also missions where you have to tail large transport ships and attach an eavesdropping device to spy on their activities.

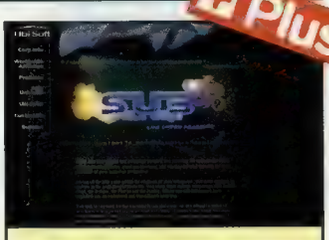
You can also be sent into a pipe to bring back an elusive piece of technology or rescue a stranded shuttle, or delve into the abyss (a descent like series of caverns) to rid the world of a menacing moray eel. There's even fishing missions where you use a sonic device to lure fish into a large fishing vessel or the odd pirate boss to kill. The missions are all varied and interesting and often so well scripted that you really start to fell immersed in this little underwater world and the side you've affiliated with.

Just a nice place to be

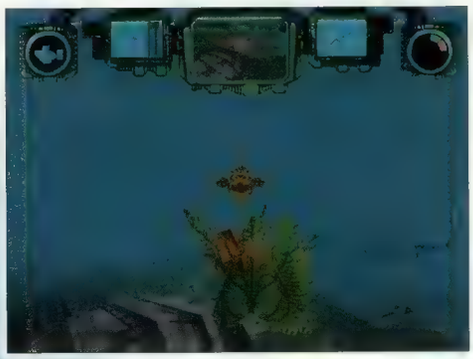
Graphically, Sub Culture is an immense treat. Supporting the 3Dfx, Power VR, Rendition, ViRGE chipsets as well as Direct 3D, Criterion have tried to cater for everyone. As is most common, the 3Dfx version looks the best and runs the fastest, but all the other versions support the same number of effects. Within the game, night and day affects the visibility of the water and at midday, travelling near the surface will result in beams of light penetrating through the waves and a lens flare from the sun. The effect is beautiful and when striking the bilinear filtered seaweed makes for some stunning yet tranquil moments within the game. There's more to this environment, as little fish swim around the ocean in schools and angel fish will try and eat you, forcing you to gib them into little pieces with your weaponry. There's also sea turtles that blissfully swim around beautifully animated which you can also gib :) or if you're not in a hurry to go anywhere, ride on their backs.

Sub Culture is a fantastic game. If you liked Privateer (1 or 2) or Elite, you'll instantly enjoy this title. Even if you weren't to fond of said games, Sub Culture offers a deeply interactive environment that, without any form of cutesy-ness at all, manages to generate a totally warm feeling when playing. Whether through its swimming schools of fish and tranquil water sounds, or captivating characters and missions, Sub Culture is a classic which other underwater sims to come will be compared to.

Jere Lawrence



www.ubisoft.com/subculture/



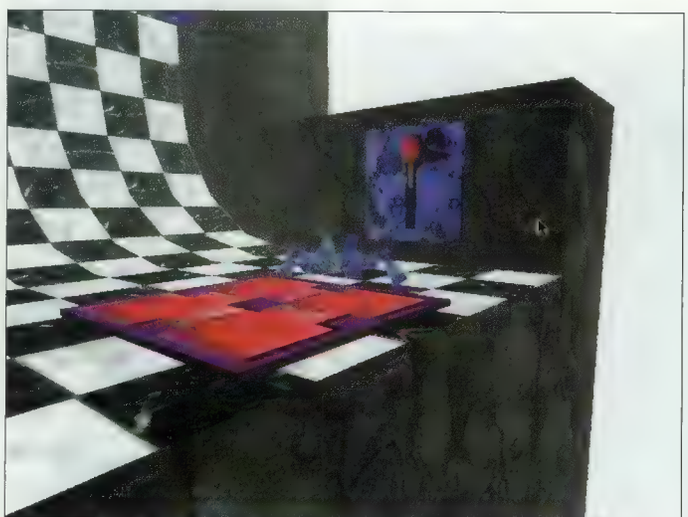


82%

Category	Privateering sim
Players	1
Publisher	Criterion Studios
Price	$89.95
Rating	G8+
Available	Now
For	The first underwater sim that actually remembers the ocean is teeming with all sorts of marine life, and includes various fish and creatures to encounter.
Against	Shields don't regenerate. Without shields you can't safely prospect before being killed by a pirate.
Need	P90, 16Mb RAM, Win95, 4 x CD.
Want	P200, 32Mb, 3Dfx / Power VR or Riva 128.

GALAPAGOS

Here's a brief summary of Galapagos. Huh? What is this? Hmm, I wonder what this does...? No! Aargh! Nooo!! Stop, Mendel! STOP! OH NO! Not that way!! Nooooo!!! You stupid thing! NNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!



Strange, silly, trippy, frustrating, compelling. If these things appeal to you, maybe helping a cute blue spider negotiate his abstract surroundings will too...

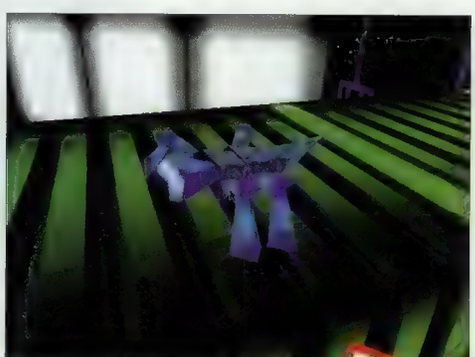
At this point your reviewer breaks down and buries his head in his hands. I just cannot cope any more. It's reached the stage where I have no idea whether I like Mendel or not. Right now I can't even remember if I've been enjoying Galapagos. This game is just sooo frustrating. And yet, somehow, I can't stop playing it...

Okay, back to the beginning. First, what is Galapagos? Galapagos is a place, a very strange place that's part sci-fi dream, part fun-fair nightmare. It's also the place where Mendel was created. So what is Mendel then? A small, scaly, blue, six-legged spider is the simple answer. A prototype construction of highly advanced artificial intelligence is what the manual reckons. I prefer my description because it sounds cuter, or maybe that's just me. The plot requires him to be a new synthetic organism (or whatever), but it's mostly half-formed nonsense that would be best ignored really.

Lemming-like, sort of

So, what is important to know is that Mendel (the cutesy spider) is trying to escape from Galapagos, and you have to help him. Immediately, Galapagos ventures into dangerous, unpredictable gaming territory by not allowing you to have direct control over Mendel. Since, as you now know, Mendel is a cute, blue spider, he quite naturally wants to do what any other cute, blue spider would do in the same situation. That is, wander around rooms and weird platforms trying not to get killed. You can't do anything about the first part; Mendel just walks along completely of his own accord - maybe he'll turn right at the T-junction up ahead, perhaps he'll go left, more likely he'll reach the edge then head back the way he came. The "trying not to get killed" part is where you come in.

The only way to protect Mendel from the many, many fatal hazards he'll encounter in his journey is to change the environment he inhabits. For example, Mendel starts the game encased in a cell on a high platform. On the wall below the cell is a blue button, while beneath this is another platform. Clicking on the button will remove the cell and allow Mendel to scurry to the edge and drop down to the second platform. Once here, he'll happily stroll from end to end, unless you work out what the flashing blue squares at either side are for. Wait patiently until Mendel is standing on the square, then click on it. It turns out that this is a lift that will transport your mottled friend to new horizons - or, indeed, other parts of the level. Later there are moving platforms, laser beams to dodge, that sort of thing.

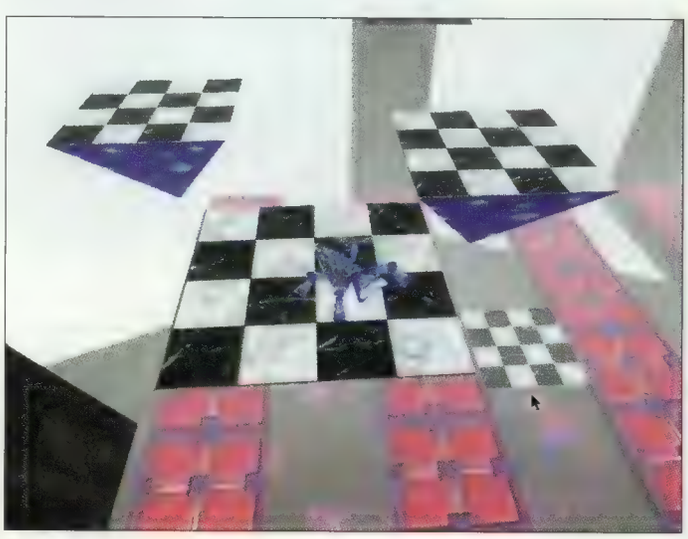


But REALLY hard

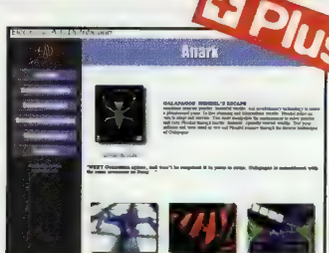
What I was rambling about at the top of this review is that Galapagos is a very testing game. It's very tough - that's difficult as in puzzles that are hard to work out AND ones that are harder to accomplish even after you've solved them. The real-time nature of the game (though you can pause at any time) means you'll be dying an awful lot. But, despite it being a very real source of deep frustration (No! Mendel! Don't jump...that...way...sigh), I also felt a great sense of reward when I finally negotiated an especially nasty section - even if it took me a couple of days to do so.

If you're after something a little different...

David Wildgoose



PC Plus



http://www.ea.com/ead/galapagos.html

77%

Category	Puzzle/Action
Players	1
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Price	$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	The only pet spider game I can think of. Big and hard, too. The game, that is.
Against	Not too hard, but exceedingly tricky. Not for the easily annoyed.
Need	P90, 16Mb RAM
Want	3D accelerator


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OVERBOARD!

A Tall Ships game with translucent water, big cannons, spinning razors and slightly hard puzzles. As they say across the Tasman, what a wunner!



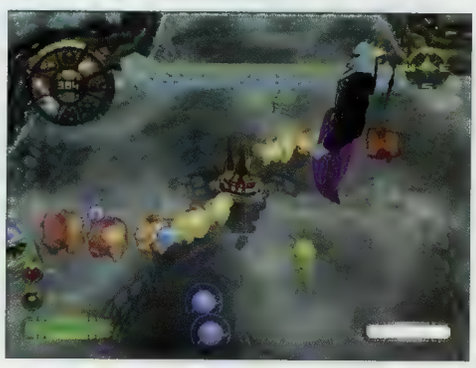
It's really just a 2D puzzle game given the 3D prettying & a cool theme. Gotta love that!

Thank you Psygnosis for bringing swashbuckling pirates back into gaming. We've got just about all kinds of themes covered in games, and one thing's evident - there just isn't enough of those lovable rogues gracing our screens. Sure, it's not the realistic crims of the high seas that were totally brutal and that would sooner slash your throat than take an insult from you at their mother's expense, it's the cute, colourful and lovable pirates of the cartoon variety and god bless 'em - they're here to help give us a jolly good gaming time.

Sleazy, colourful avarians

Well, the accent isn't so much on the actual pirates, but rather their means of transportation. Heck, if I were to get really technical, Overboard! is little more than a shoot em up with a swashbuckler feel. However, it's not your typical shoot 'em up. Overboard! features your mighty galleon on an inland system of waterways.The aim is to make your way throughout this system (each level) to an mystical super-sphere thingy that teleports you beyond, without being destroyed. Well, it's much more fun of course pretending that you're looting and pillaging (in a maritime kinda way) your way through each port of call, getting sleazy with some colourful avarians and knocking each others teeth out.

The ultimate goal is to annihilate your pirate nemesis, Blowfleet, collect plenty of treasure and hoist the pirate flag where the wretched colonies once flew theirs. These waterways aren't simple straight-forward in structure though, rather, a vast network of ports, locks, dams, and dead ends. Successful negotiation of these requires some thought on the players part - some locks open only when you uncover certain items or activate "remote" switches that are scattered throughout each level. Add to this a rather impressive system of land based defence (cannon towers, flame throwers, and circular saw-like discs that do plenty of damage), enemy vessels (colonists or rival pirates, ranging from those with simple cannons, to those that yield flame throwers, lightning generators, multiple cannons, and others) and a host of other pesky natural nuisances (sea monsters, fire spouts, etc.).





Multiplayer mayhem on the high seas

Multiple cannon launchers

To help you deal with these, you've got an interesting array of weapons at your disposal. There's the single cannon launcher, the multiple cannon launcher, the flame thrower, mines, missiles, fire mines and lightning bolts - to name the majority. This is one of Overboard!'s strengths - the weapons are diverse enough to require a different approach in attack with each weapon, and keep things interesting. For example, when firing your single cannon, it is propelled from the bow of the ship, in a straight direction. Reliable and with ammo most abundant, but not very powerful. The multiple cannons fire four at a time, from the sides and out ward, and are more powerful. However, these require that your target is perpendicular to you, and in the thick of things, when you're changing from weapon to weapon, it can get fairly intense.



Using the top down perspective, Overboard! allows three different kinds of views. There's the direct top down view, which centres your galleon and moves in a north, south, etc manner. There's a slightly isometric angle (which unfortunately renders some defences "hidden"), and a 3D view where the perspective follows your galleons bow. The graphics are really quite spiffy. Transparent water really makes a big difference in the eye candy factor (you can even see the ships you've sunk sit on the waterbed and things like deep underwater canyons), and the explosions are, as with most 3D accelerated games these days - just awesome.

Overboard! is definitely a whole lot of fun, and even better in multiplayer (thanks to the weapons). On the "would have been nice" list is the ability go in reverse, slightly better object and collision detection, and a less camp and annoying sound track.

March Stepnik

PC PowerPlay Plus

The Legend of Blowfleet

http://www.overboard.co.uk

79%

Category	Action/shooter
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Psygnosis
Price	$TBA
Rating	G8+
Available	Now

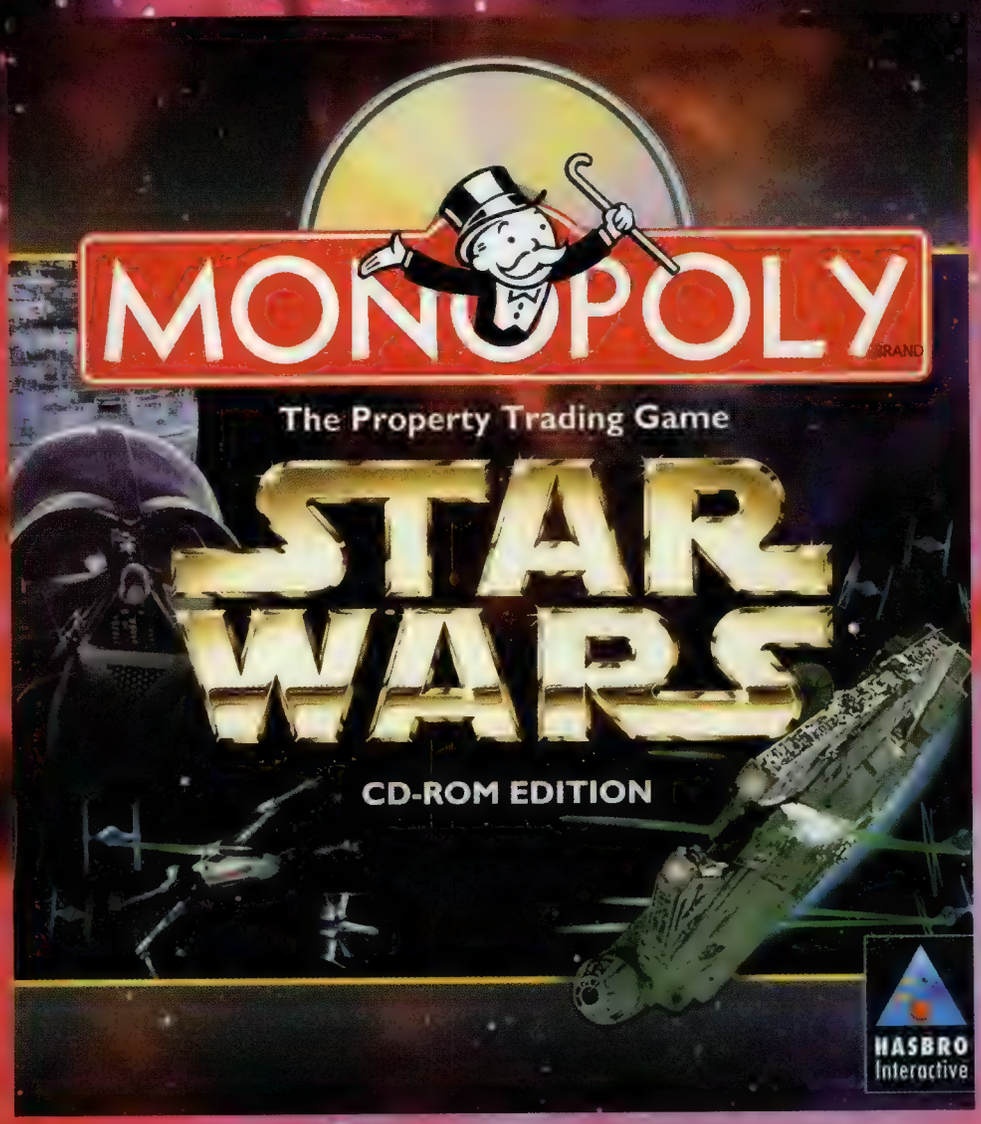
For Clear, smooth and wonderful graphics, interesting level design and clever set of weapons and power ups at your disposal.

Against While there is a the ability to morph into an airship and fly over certain barriers, the lack of three dimensions in this day and age gives the feel of something missing. The soundtrack is only enjoyable after one too many and if you were on a tacky island resort.

Need P90, Win 95, 16MB RAM.

Want P120, 32 Meg RAM, Direct 3D compatible accelerator.

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STARCRAFT

FORMULA KARTS

Realism meets arcade action meets great graphics all set to a funky backbeat. Vroom!

Anyone scared off by the terrifyingly difficult CART: Precision Racing reviewed elsewhere in this issue, may like to cast a glance in this direction. Likewise, anyone appalled by the putrid stench of Sega's other racing game released this month, Daytona USA Deluxe, ought to take in the chestful of fresh air that they (or rather developers Manic Media) have created in the shape of Formula Karts.

Formula Karts offers a far more friendly racing experience than CART, one that's accessible and fun without being stupidly unrealistic. It is also, in equally drastic opposition to Daytona, an exciting, sometimes thrilling, and always rewarding game.

First impressions

I knew this was going to be good right from the start. Why? Because of the music. Instead of the heavy guitar riffs that usually accompany the intro in this type of game, I was pleasantly surprised to hear some nice, pianoled techno (akin to the exceedingly cool Tempest 2000 soundtrack). I'm aware that this is a hugely subjective reason, and I'm sure I'll hear howls of protest from our more easily antagonised readers, but please indulge me for a moment. Game music is highly indicative of a developer's approach to their game - it creates a mood, after all. To me, loud rock signifies an attempt at something aggressive, macho, and "real", while techno is more modern, stylish, and "unreal". I'd rather the latter any time, but whatever your preference I'm sure you'd agree that Formula Karts makes for a nice change.

Reverting to more traditional racing game features, in FK there are two modes of play. Championship means a race through each of the eight circuits to accumulate points, while in Arcade you do the same to earn prize money. The main difference between the two is that in Arcade you must finish in the top three to progress, and are also given the opportunity to purchase engine, tyre, turbo, and fuel upgrades between races.





It's not an annoyingly difficult driving 'sim', and neither is it a straight arcade throttle-fest. It sits somewhere in between, and we like that



Features available to be customised are car damage (on or off), difficulty (four levels), laps (from 1-40), and a selection of karts (with varying acceleration, grip, and top speed). During the longer races, i.e. roughly more than eight laps, you will have to stop to refuel and repair damage, but this is a painless exercise as it requires no more than a little drive-thru (literally) detour along the pit lane. You are also given the chance for unlimited practice on any of the eight tracks beforehand.

Race it!

What I particularly enjoyed about Formula Karts is its racing feel. It's not so much that the karts handle accurately or the driving model is physically perfect, but the way the race is run. The other karts respond well to your presence in the race. They attempt to cut you off or run you wide in corners, blocking and weaving down the straights. They jostle ferociously with each other, often running three wide through a corner. You'll always find yourself in the thick of the action since mistakes aren't too costly, but neither do your seven competitors spread out too thinly around the circuit (like they do in far too many other games).

If I had to criticise anything I might suggest that it is too easy. As an experienced driver (in games anyway!) I won the Championship and Arcade modes first time at the Normal difficulty. However, since switching to Pro, turning car damage on, and increasing the laps (to force several pitstops), I've been confronted with a stern challenge.

David Wildgoose



http://www.sega.com

84%

Category	Racing
Players	1-8 (multiplayer network only)
Publisher	Sega
Price	$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	Sensational racing feel thanks, in large part, to the superb opponent AI.
Against	A little easy for veterans. Only eight tracks.
Need	P90, 8Mb RAM
Want	P133 (for SVGA)



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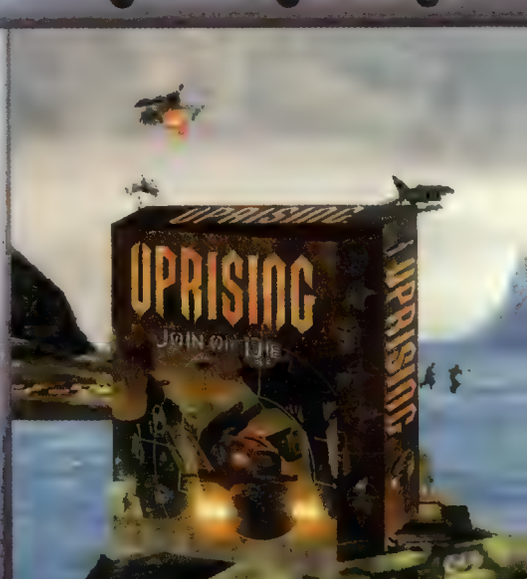
This title yet to be classified.





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WORMS 2

The splatter-comic Scorched Earth 2D- projectile game conversion returns, with simply gorgeous graphics and an huge arsenal of new Sixty New Weapons....



Worms 1 was an excellent party game. The tiny animated worms brandishing heavy artillery and blowing each other up was a sight to make even the most concrete-hearted person chuckle. Besides having fast, pretty graphics and just the right blend of gameplay and humour, it had quite a serious core of physics modelling and subtle adjustments which made it quite a challenge against other players with more expertise. Now Worms returns, in DirectX with completely revamped graphics engine and all-round improvements and added features.

Sublime animation

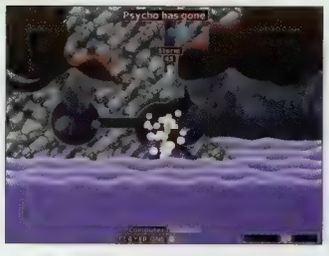
Such as the flowing background animations, with debris drifting past in the breeze, and the colour gradations across the sky rendered in glorious 16-bit colour. And 640 x 480 screen resolution, which allows each individual worm to be animated to a level of detail comparable to Warner Bros cartoons, for instance. Each one nervously shifts and checks their six while waiting their turn, holster weapons and don equipment, and cheer and whoop when they score a hit. They really are entirely new entities, with all the cheeky character of the old version, only amplified by the sublime animation. Of course the ballistic qualities of the explosions and weapons effects are now just beautiful to look at.

Equally amplified is the music, which is now mostly atmospheric environment sounds, with very non-intrusive ambient tracks adding just a little bit of mood to the game. Of course, the worms voices are fully upgraded, with the customizable speech settings, including the time less "Elvis" pack and the popular Ren & Stimpy voices from Worms reinforcements. These are more humorous than you can realise without playing them. The Elvis voice shuddering: "Aahhm gonna get ya, Bwah" is very cool and a welcome return to the game.

The interface was more or less perfect in the first incarnation, with the mouse controlling scrolling about the levels, and keyboard arrow keys controlling you Worm's movement across the screen. Only now the entire new weaponry arsenal is organised into categories, and accessible from a menu from a single right-click.

Luscious backgrounds

The new weapons, it has to be said, almost defy description. Everything from the original Worms has returned, with pure improvements like the Mortar, which provides a flat trajectory over long range, the napalm and petrol bombs which roast large areas of the landscape, and creatures exploited to carry payloads into the heat of battle, the familiar Sheep and now the wacky carrier pigeon, and the high-power but slow moving old lady who mutters cantankerously before exploding with a deafening report. Out of a total Sixty I have sampled but three quarters of them, so far they are all absolutely excellent. From guidance systems to defensive emplacements to tunnelling and digging tools used to take cover under fire. The levels that all this action takes place on are backed up by a nice hefty selection of luscious backgrounds, and the fractal random generator provides near-unlimited variety every time you play.



The main glowing essence of this upgrade has been Team17's collective feedback over their website which has directly resulted in the brilliance they now bestow upon us, their adoring, discerning public. Possibly the best and most admirable feature now implemented into the game is absolute customization of all the in-game variables, from amount of hit points to air viscosity and weapon damage/warhead payloads. If anything in the game seems even slightly misbalanced it is a simple matter to change whatever it is from the extensive menus system which contains slider controls to virtually every aspect of the game.

Eddie Dawson



Few games increase their entertainment value when alcohol enters the equation. Worms is one of the few

Plus



Upcoming is the final internet code which will allow 6-player net games, possibly over a dedicated system (ala battle.net)!
www.worms2.com

PC PowerPlay GOLD 90%

Category	Action/Puzzle
Players	6 (simultaneous network or internet) 18 (hotseat)
Publisher	Team 17 Microprose
Price	$TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now
For	Everything you could have dreamed for and more. Quite possibly the most impressive sequel of the year, due to the developer's direct input from their fans.
Against	Not a very serious game, this may turn off persons who dislike cutesy graphics and non-nihilistic humorous themes.
Need	Pentium, 8Mb RAM, Win95, Directx5
Want	P166, 32Mb RAM, Party people.

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PERFECT ASSASSIN

Between being the lone surviving human in the universe, and being the ultimate killing machine you find it difficult to mingle at parties. This and the fact your memory has been erased by an unknown enemy. Touching down in a strange isolated planet colony, you begin the hunt for your latest quarry...

The action in Perfect Assassin occurs in a series of fixed jazzy camera angles overlooking the playing areas, similar to Alone in the Dark or Ecstatica. Your character is directed to different locations using the mouse to designate locations, and also to select targets to obliterate.

The characters are rendered in scaled isometric 8-sided bitmaps (think Doom) and projected onto artistic 2D backgrounds, ala Bioforge. This makes for fast in-game animation and rapid transitions. The interface is quite elegantly simple, with objects you wish to retrieve only needing to be clicked on, and holding down the right mouse button instantly causes the transition to hostile mode which enables you unleash a hail of ammunition from your gigantic cannon thing which you casually carry around raised in one hand.

Investigation and interrogation

Apart from decaffeinating monsters, there is a whole distinct layer of investigation and interrogation through which you solve problems and uncover information as you go. When speaking to creatures in the strange universe which you find yourself within, there is an absolutely groundbreaking communication screen which allows you to assemble incredibly specific questions to pose to your unhuman counterparts. From this screen you can access all the information you know about and query the who, where and what of each item, and also further investigate new facts.

A visual database appears as you obtain more facts, and each item changes and enhances as you gain more detail, or old info becomes redundant. Along with this, you can alter the attitude with which you present your interrogation, from meek and mumbling behaviour through to snarling vicious domination. It's excellent to see the alien's manners change as soon as you unholster your anti-tank buster and wave it in their face.



Finally, a game that (in many ways) befits the moniker of Cyberpunk. And it's good too!



The sounds are suitably atmospheric, with a strange alien resonance. The voice of your character is remarkable similar to one Mr Schwarzenegger, who bears more than a passing resemblance to our muscular protagonist.

Judge Dredd artist

Perhaps not surprising, as the whole world is the creation of legendary 2000AD artist Kev Walker, who has worked on such prestigious projects as Judge Dredd and Rogue Warrior. There is a polished, juicy gleam to the artwork throughout, from the crisp details of an alien control panel to the rugged appearance of a fortified desert outpost. This deep, imaginary world has it's own unique cultures and civilisations, which merge in a believable fashion and further absorb the player into the plot and characters of the adventure. The twists and overall depth of the story make it a continually interesting jaunt into the mind of a cyberpunk visionary. Great Stuff.

Eddie Dawson



+ Plus



http://gi.grolier.com/gi/products/games/docs/maingame.html

80%

Category	Adventure/RPG
Players	1
Publisher	Grolier Interactive
Price	$TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

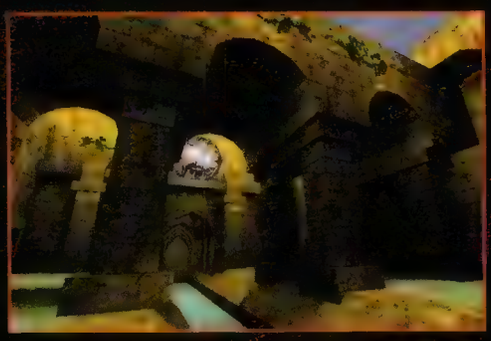
For Excellent artwork and an deep storyline mix with groundbreaking communication and A.I. Futuristic RPG at it's best.

Against Point and click interface doesn't translate the heat of battle very well, and combat a little too slow for action-game-heads.

Need 486/DX66, 8Mb RAM, 2 x CD-ROM, Vesa video card

Want Pentium, 16Mb RAM, 4 x CD-ROM







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KKnD EXTREME

From local developers Beam comes the latest incarnation of their entrant in the RTS game...







The Facts: KKND Extreme is a "special edition" release of last year's home-grown, real-time combat success (90% in PowerPlay #7, back issue fans). It features all that was in the original KKND - all the missions and cut-scenes. Making it worthy of that "Extreme" tag is the inclusion of twenty new missions and enhanced multiplayer facilities. Both of these require some elaboration. With the new solo missions there are ten for each side - the Survivors and the Evolved - and it will come as no great shock to discover that they are quite a bit tougher than the normal missions. The disappointing aspect is that they arrive without the original's cool linking mission briefings or cut-scenes - you see a list of the new missions and simply select which one to play. Yeah, I know, there is a nice but plainly-rendered briefing before each, but it's not quite the same. The multiplayer improvements are in the form of new maps and, better, a Kaos mode. The latter option pits up to six players (human or CPU, allied or not) together on the one map, leaving them to go the tonk at close quarters. I'm glad to report that it does work reasonably well.

And that's it. It's hard to know quite what to make of this update. Let's look at two scenarios:

For veterans...

One - you're a KKND veteran, you've finished it and are eager for more. Does Extreme offer value for money? I'm inclined to think not, since you own more than half this game already. Twenty poorly-presented missions and some multiplayer trappings for $50? That's not a good deal, unless you're desperate for more KKND. Even then, my advice would be to wait for KKND 2, the real sequel. But - hey! - look how well Counterstrike has sold, so what the hell do I know?

...A veteran game

Two - you don't own KKND, but are looking to pick up one of these real-time combat thingies. Clearly, you'd be getting a better deal than those who purchased KKND when it first came out over a year ago. All that new stuff and those enhancements...wait! "When it first came out OVER A YEAR AGO". That's right, since its release KKND has been superseded by the likes of Red Alert and Dark Reign, and then obliterated by Total Annihilation and Age Of Empires. When it first came out, KKND was in possession of several pioneering features of real-time combat - advanced, dynamic, and quite-clever-really, computer AI, upgradable buildings, the ability to order multiple constructions or a continuous supply of troops (doing away with having to build or select them ONE AT A TIME), and a welcome sense of humour (though, as I said earlier, this is absent in the new missions). But all these are now de rigeur for any self-respecting real-time combat game, and the above-mentioned titles (plus many others) have already forged many more innovations that are sorely and noticeably lacking in KKND.

Simply, there are too many other games that should demand more of your attention than this.

David Wildgoose

70%

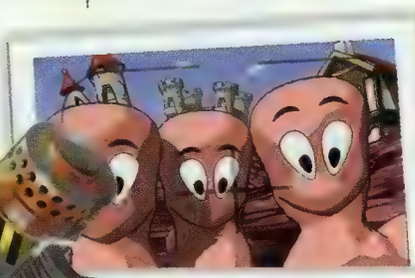
Category	Continuous
Players	1-8
Publisher	EA/Beam
Price	$49.95
Rating	M15
Available	Now
For	There's more here than in the original release.
Against	But, despite still being a decent combat game, it's overpriced and outdated.
Need	P75, 16Mb RAM, 2xCD
Want	Some friends on the Internet.

WORMS 2

they're back, they're cute and deadlier than ever!

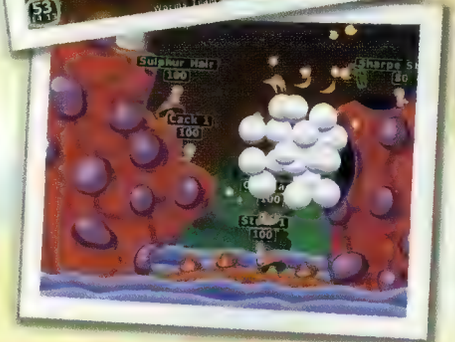
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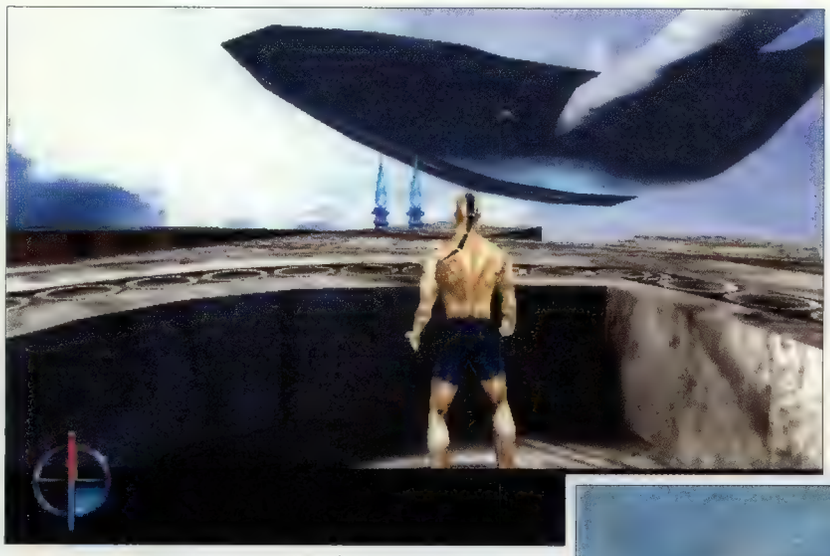
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DREAMS TO REALITY

Many people thought Tomb Raider was French when it first appeared, such was the style. Now we've got the real thing - a French TR clone, does it deliver?



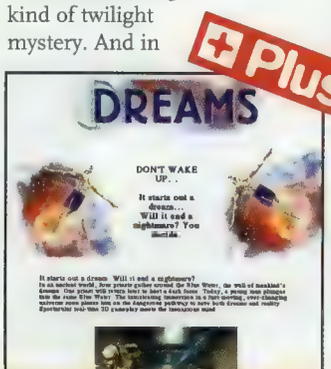
Dreams to Reality is a new addition to the 3D adventure game genre, popularised by the likes of Tomb Raider. The story runs like this: In May 1997, a portal between the 'Dream World' and reality is opened. A lil' fella jumps out of the portal and some suitably bad looking guys enter it. Ten years later our lil' guy is all grown up. This is our character, Duncan, the chosen one. You've guessed it already, Duncan returns through the portal to the 'Dream World' to see what badness has been going down.

Weird and pretty

This is all described in the animated introduction, a nice piece of work. It's fairly vague and sinister, maintaining a kind of twilight mystery. And in a game about dreams this has got to be good, right? In fact, the game generally looks really nice. We are treated to fancy scenery a la The Neverending Story. The cut scenes interspersing the action are clean and beautiful. These involve falling into pools and flying through gravity-defying doors. The fantastic mood of the whole piece is held well.

This world is suitably populated by the silly and improbable fodder of dreams. The folks you meet are both friendly and hostile, but all quite unexpected and bizarre. This is pretty refreshing, I think to myself. In a whole industry of copycats and wannabes, this is a fresh concept. If the fellas at Cryo can pull this off, this could be a very special game.

The game's artwork and soundtrack are super. A lot of care was put in and the mood I mentioned, is held by these features. The soundtrack has that kind of mellow ambient feel and it moves from being blissful to more sinister. And the sky is just beautiful, along with the general geography. All of this, combined with the cut scenes makes for very enchanting surroundings.



http://www.cryo-interactive.com/dreams.htm
Both Win 95 and native 3Dfx versions are on the same game CD.

Bust a move

It's all very pretty and inspiring, but in the end a game is made on its gameplay. Sadly, this is where Dreams to Reality falls down. The controls aren't bad, but our man Duncan doesn't move at all nicely. The game didn't run smoothly and the basic movement suffered due to jerky scrolling. Jumping in tight situations is always a gamble, swimming can be tortuous. After playing the stand-out games of this genre, this kind of character movement is fairly unacceptable. Damn it, I never felt in control! Combat with the various enemies is either too easy or impossible. The best thing Duncan can do is fly and flying kept me happy for ages - this is one instance where the controls pick up a little. What an enormously different game this would have been, had the basic movement been superior.

But even if Duncan moved like a dragster, he couldn't escape the rather pedestrian level design. It's straight item collection and any confusion with Tomb Raider must be allayed, as you can't roam freely and are pretty much trapped in a room until you work out what to do. In other words, it is rather unchallenging.

I get the feeling that Dreams to Reality is a bit of a wolf in sheep's clothing. It looks great, but for all the dolling up that has gone on, this game handles like a shopping trolley. It isn't as immediately gripping as Tomb Raider or Resident Evil and these games are its rivals. All in all, it isn't a bad game, but in comparison with its contemporaries in the market, it just doesn't stand up.

John Dewhurst



Sure it might look pretty, but it falls down in the gameplay department. And Duncan isn't half as much fun to watch as Lara either...

71%

Category	Action/Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Cryo
Price	$TBA
Rating	M
Available	Now
For	Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. Sound and artwork rock!
Against	Controls are a little dodgy, no strain on the intellect.
Need	P90, 16Mb RAM, Win 95/DOS
Want	P150, 32Mb RAM

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BROKEN SWORD II The Smoking Mirror

What good is a broken sword? How do you break one anyway?
Is the smoking mirror broken too? Why is it smoking?
Can glass burn? What's going on here?!!



Traditional adventure gaming with beautiful & appropriate art. We like



Yes! That obnoxious American and his peppy parisian pet are back in the sequel to Broken Sword: Shadow Of The Templars. The first was a fairly good adventure simply in that it provided a fairly fun romp all over the globe with a cinematic quality to it. However, the bits that gave it the cinematic edge were, as they say in the movie industry, rather droll. Cliched characters, bodgy accents, and dialogue that was a tad, well, superfluous. So as a sequel to such a game, the only expectations to be had are that the producers of this game actually spent more time perfecting the voice acting, dialogue, and general feel to the game. Other than that, what more can be said? This is an adventure game!

The old adventure game thing

Okay, the traditional (mouse driven, point and click) adventure gaming genre has been taking a bit of a dive of late. Understandably - the increase in processing power has meant that we can get 3D action spiced with our adventure, as seen in the current trend. Not only does it make the adventure look prettier, a side affect is a definite increase in pace. Tis a bold step to release an adventure game nowadays, as Virgin have done with BSII - it makes good picking for games critics and players alike. Yes, there was a time when an adventure game would be a guaranteed hit. Our tastes have evolved though. Now we won't accept just anything with a point and click interface and decent graphics. Games like this will never be readily accepted. Not now. Thankfully, never again. Broken Sword II?

The graphics are a notch prettier than the original BS, and have a more cartoon feel to it too. Standard throughout are detailed and breathtaking backgrounds, all presented with parallax scrolling. Variety is another winner here. Although based in France at the beginning (much like the first BS), you will once again travel the globe in search for your rather adventurous girlfriend. The story this time revolves around a drug dealing underworld and the unleashing of a Mayan deity to assist a druglord with world domination. Storyline a little tired? Maybe, though another thing in The Smoking Mirror's favour is that while you start the game playing the part of George Stobbart, regularly throughout the game you get to see the events of the game through the eyes of his girlfriend, Nicco. Sure, this factor alone doesn't make this game great, but it definitely makes things interesting.

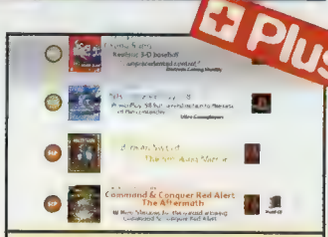
Smart talkin'

Other than that, Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror (er, great title, eh?) is very much like a second version of the first without any major improvements. The graphics are nicer, but on par with the first. Same goes with the sound, and the use of cliched characters. The dialogue is a touch smarter now, and the story moves along fairly well, though the ultimate thing that lets down BSII is the early "oh-dear-point-and-click" shackles this game bears. Some areas require thought, while most require dragging the cursor over certain areas till you find what you need. Also, it's terribly linear. When you are limited to a small area until you solve the obscure puzzle, your appreciation and patience levels tend to drop substantially.

Otherwise, BSII is again, a fairly enjoyable adventure game. However, you'll know if you can stomach the traditional adventure game genre, and if you can - you'll get some enjoyment out of this one.

March Stepnik





Plus

http://www.vie.com/ultra-shock/games/index.html

80%

Category	Adventure (point & click)
Players	1
Publisher	Virgin Interactive
Price	$TBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now
For	This has a strong international feel to it, which to some is a very attractive prospect. Cinematic feel and attention unrivalled in many "live action" adventure games. Fun too, if you appreciate most things in life.
Against	Stereotypes, cliches and predictability abound. Run the mouse over the grey bit and hope the cursor changes... Click the panties on your face and hope... Click..
Need	486 DX266, Win 95, 16MB RAM, Direct X 5.0 (included).
Want	P150

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G

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www.ubisoft.com

Metro GAMES

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THE TONE REBELLION

A dreamy, mystical voyage into Karmic resource management, mixing Warcraft with LSD.

The Tone Rebellion has you controlling your own race of intelligent hovering jellyfish, known as "Floaters", and leading them to salvation against the evil forces of some intergalactic (and probably not vegetarian) evil. Ah yes.

So, in order to achieve this you are willed to tap the "Tone", a mystical force which flows from ethereal springs which conveniently sprout across the countryside. The problem is, the Leviathan (read: evil squid-guy) has control of these so you will have to wrestle them from his slimy grip in order to exploit their magical power.

Mutant Kung-Fu Jellyfish

You can choose one of 3 Jellyfish Species to play, each with varied focuses and strengths. This involves instructing your fellow cephalopods to construct Tone Spreading devices, and "Dojos" to train your octopus army in Kung-Fu, presumably. As the game progresses you use the Bruce Lee jellyfish to knock out the evil infestations, and manage the activities of the grunt-level octopods (the ones without University education) to build and maintain your watery forces.

Of course, as things get heavier you have the option to construct more elaborate dojos, to train jellyfish with escalating powers of magical buttkicking, up to the delirious heights of spellcasting and mass destruction.

Your construction is limited to the zones you have tapped into your power network(ala Command & Conquer), and as your total power assimilation increases, your population of Floaters grows accordingly.





The tone Rebellion: a relaxing strategy game involving war between tribes of jellyfish with martial-arts abilities. Okay,that's... pretty weird

As your decidedly soft enemies fall before your equally squishy forces, you collect artifacts and keys to unlock portals into parallel universes, which you beam into with crack jellyfish assault crews and start messing with the unsuspecting crayfish Homeboys on the flipside.

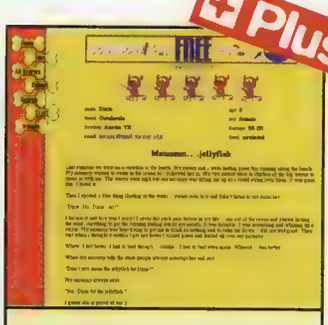
Attractive Jellyfish

This all has a very Warcraft kind of feel to it, although your control is somewhat indirect, in that you issue orders to jellyfish teams that belong to a particular building, and they simultaneously obey, more or less. This makes it very easy to control, and actually quite relaxing, considering this all occurring in a landscape with luscious background visuals. These complement the excellent musical score, a haunting melodic Enya kind of deal, which is perfectly appropriate. And the graceful, drifting movements of your Floaters are truly very beautiful in an attractive Jellyfish kind of way.

Within the crisp landscape graphics, subtle indications hold the key to unlocking the Artifact puzzles which delay your interplanetary transitions. These are very logical and nonverbal, which really adds a pleasant Myst-style investigation element to the game.

In many ways it is quite simple, but its subtle, thoughtful features provide a welcome change from the ordinary. Things like being able to review the tasks in operation and assign a priority to them, or cancel orders which stand in the way of issues more pressing. This is in fact almost a necessity, because the Jellyfish theme virtually demands that events occur gradually, which in turn requires the player to plan ahead. To go with the flow, basically.

Eddie Dawson



Plus

http://www.baddogs.com/jellyfish.htm

Funny stories about jellyfish. Completely irrelevant to this, and every other page in the magazine, but Virgin, as usual, are asleep at the World Wide Wheel and don't have a word on their site about their game, so what the hey!

80%

Category	Strategy
Players	1-4
Publisher	Virgin Interactive
Price	$TBA
Rating	G8+
Available	Now
For	Fantastic graphics, great trippy music and a refreshing mystical thematic give highly original, relaxing gameplay. Puzzle elements provide real "discovery" sensations.
Against	Too easy for hardcore strategy-heads, and the 2D sideways environment perhaps a bit limited.
Need	P90, Win95, 8Mb RAM, 4xCD, Directx5.
Want	P166, 16Mb RAM, 8xCD, Fast Video card


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RED ALERT: The Aftermath

Wey hey, a new mission pack for Red Alert. Millions of you are going to buy it anyway, but here's what we think...

The first Red Alert expansion pack Counterstrike sold a LOT of copies, despite being a pretty average effort. No multiplayer enhancements, some new maps and a few giant ants..it wasn't Westwood's greatest moment. Combine this with the tank rushing problem and new sexy real time games doing the rounds, Red Alert was looking at a one way trip off many a gamer's hard drive. Aftermath arrives with the usual features such as extra maps, more single player missions but most importantly new units that are multiplayer enabled. Time for me to set aside my Total Annihilation duelling with one Ashton "TA and beer, I've discovered the meaning of life" Mills and head for the Westwood Internet server to try some of these new units out.



Oh look, he's built three war factories. That tactics not gonna work anymore, pal!

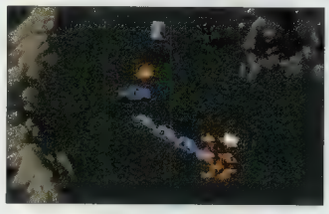
At last! Proper multiplayer

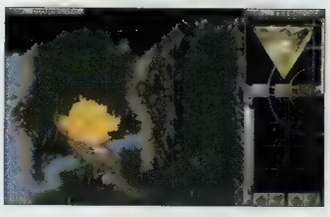
After my first few games against faceless opponents across the Net, it soon became apparent that Aftermath does change the flavour of multiplayer games. Most notably the limiting of the infamous tank rushing strategy. Building multiple war factories no longer gives a production speed bonus in tank construction. While this slows down your army build-up, it does restrict each side in pumping out enormous amounts of armour within the early stages of the game. This is a good thing. The Allies defensive gun turrets which were known for being on par with the strength of a water pistol, are now more destructive and fire at a faster rate. Equally the Soviet Tesla Coils are better defensive propositions now that they are no longer armour coated with wet cardboard.

So what about the new units themselves? The Soviets get the Tesla Tank which is a lightly armoured mobile Tesla Coil. The electric theme continues with the Shock Troopers, fun loving guys that also act as Tesla Coils but more importantly can't get run over by tanks. In other words they are actually useful in battle, unlike other Red Alert infantry. The Soviet navy was always a non-event, so at last a sub has come along that is equipped with sea to land missiles. If all this doesn't get the job done, time to roll in the MAD Tank. A nasty fellow that self-destructs damaging everything in its vicinity except infantry. The Allies are also not without some goodies. The best is the Chronotank, which as the name suggests allows teleportation around the battlefield. Field mechanics for repairing vehicles and nuclear detonation trucks (one way trip straight to enemy H.Q.) also allow for some extra battlefield options. My fave new strategy was teleporting Chronotanks into Soviet ore fields for Harvester attacks, sneaky but effective. All in all, these units succeed in delivering the strategic variety that Westwood were aiming for in multiplayer.

Cool missions!

If solo play is more to your liking, Aftermath is more of what we got in Counterstrike. Nine new missions a piece for both the Allies and Soviets, and a few new background songs to listen to. A few of the missions are welcomely quirky such as: A new breed of Soviet super tank threatens the Allied player. Once you take out the Soviet comms center the tanks turn on their Russky masters, nice twist.





While this is a better package than Counterstrike, Aftermath's biggest problem is that Red Alert is yesterday's hero. Great in its day, Total Annihilation and Dark Reign really show up our old friend in most areas. True LOS and terrain affected battles, these are features sorely lacking in Red Alert. A competent expansion, but it's time to move on.

Pete Sharpe



http://www.westwood.com

70%

Category	Strategy
Players	1-8
Publisher	Westwood Studios
Price	$29.95
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now
For	Inclusion of new "Mega" size maps for multiplay, as well as a 100 new maps.
Against	Each player must have a copy of Counterstrike to use new maps and units.
Need	Original Red Alert
Want	Same system resources as Red Alert.

DARK EARTH

91%

"Adventure game fans should truly love this game, it's the closest thing I've come to playing an interactive novel, even more so than Final Fantasy VII. All I can say is get it!"

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"...thoroughly absorbing...the best adventure we've seen this year..."

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"...one of the most beautiful and technically impressive games we have seen for a very, very long time...should appeal to many gamers who wouldn't normally be attracted to the adventure genre..."

PC ZONE

"...visually stunning...the most detailed and atmospheric 3D adventure game I have ever seen..."

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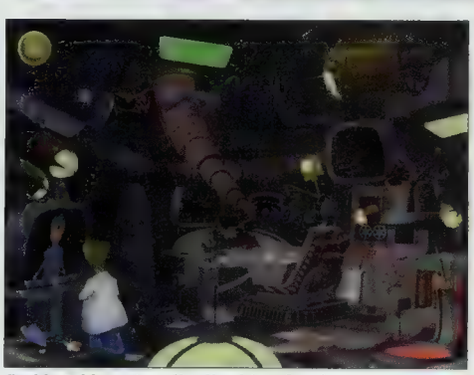
MICROPROSE

http://www.microprose.com

THE FEEBLE FILES

It's a wacky, zany madcap adventure. But wait! Don't turn the page, it's actually pretty good...





Feeble & his mates all talk with soft voices & Pommy accents

Ahhh, the English. They're a weird bunch over there in the (to some) Mother country. But often this is weird in a good way, take for instance Red Dwarf, take Wallace and Gromit, take Tory sexual practices, and take the Spice Girls (please, somebody, take the Spice Girls). It's silly and inane things like this that make England what it is today, and often that's a good thing. In this case, the case of the Feeble files, the English mindset is also a good thing.

LGMs & crop circles

Before you jump to conclusions, it's not a take off of the X-Files, and nor does it have anything to do with the hilarious 'Meet the Feebles'. It does, however, have a lot to do with a little green alien called Feeble, a satellite, crop circles, a big brain that dispenses happy drugs and advice, and a criminal conspiracy to topple an entire government. You take the role of Feeble who is, as his name suggests, a little less than commanding and debonair. He's from a race of little green men, and likes to tool around through the galaxy in his spaceship - and he also likes to leave what he calls 'crop circles' on planets like 'Earth' (he's even won an award for it). It's during one of his journeys back from Earth that he accidentally crashes into an Earth satellite, sending it on a collision course with his planet. And so sets of a chain of events that ends up with feeble Feeble narrowly escaping a lobotomy, and then taking part in a revolution that overthrows the OmniBrain - a giant entity (not unlike Big Brother on happy pills) that sets down the doctrine for the people.

Happy pills

The interface of the usual style for this genre of games, with a mouse pointer changing into different icons depending which object it is centred upon, and the usual (but very very annoying) 'but what would I do with that?' response from Feeble when you errantly click where you're not supposed to. There's also an inventory, called 'the Oracle' which both stores items you pick up on your journey as well as a database of local history and some of the doctrines as set down by the OmniBrain - and there is also an option to turn on a hint section. Now, hints are best used only when you're completely stuck and tearing your hair out in frustration, but with the Feeble Files, the hint section could have been a little more explicit. When I was stuck, I turned to the hint system, to be told that I needed to get to the Ministry of something of other for a personality reprogram. However, what it didn't say was that to get there I had to put a human doll in a faulty teleporter, go to the spaceport and listen to a conversation, then do about 10 other things before I could get my reprogramming done. It's not that I want to be baby walked through the whole adventure, but when I'm stuck I want help, goddamit! There is a timed call hint line though....which may help explain some things. However, other than this, the Feeble Files is a very decent graphical adventure. It's engaging and fun, and the puzzles are hard but not silly (most can be thought through eventually). The graphics are reasonably well done too, in a cute cartoon style, and there's plenty of humour as well as the odd dollop of poignant social observation thrown in - which is nice, and something that's sadly lacking in many other games of this nature. All up, it's not an earth shattering release, but still a good, fun adventure well worth a look if it sounds like your kind of thing.

Gareth Jones



Here's feeble; a little, green, zany alien, is feeble





PC Plus

www.adventuresoft.com/infoweb.html

73%

Category	Graphical Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Adventure soft
Price	$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	Humour and wit with a point, puzzles worth solving, a well constructed and sustained narrative, Robert Llewellyn (from Red Dwarf) as Feeble, and a storyline of a decent length.
Against	The help system is pretty feeble, and Feeble has to keep walking next to objects before he can interact with them - and he walks pretty damn slowly.
Need	P75, 16MB RAM, Win '95, 4x CD.
Want	Not much more.

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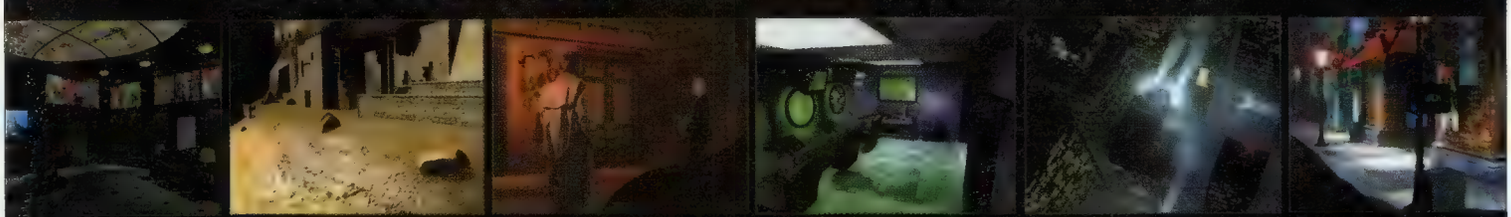
TEX MURPHY

Overseer

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Actual game screen shots

Classification to be confirmed

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ACCESS SOFTWARE INCORPORATED

RESIDENT EVIL

From Playstation to PC come the same meaty violence, same beautiful graphics and same crappy acting.





Remember when Tomb Raider was released it was likened somewhat to the title Resident Evil? Resident Evil? Eh? It was a Playstation hit, so many of us PC exclusive players never heard of the title. It's safe to say that the two games hold some similarity. In the same way Z looked and felt a lot like Command & Conquer, Resident Evil can be likened to Tomb Raider. Well, after what seems years in gaming terms, Resident Evil has made its ever so careful jump from the Playstation console format to the Personal Computer. Of course, it's stopped off along the way, had a shower, and picked a brand new graphics accelerated suit. And the emperor's new clothes?



http://www.capcom.com/games/resevil/residentevil.html

Like a bad movie

Resident Evil has a feel that is the epitome of B-grade horror flicks. On par with the Plan 9 From Outer Space kind of horror flicks - the story sequences of Resident Evil stink, and stink really bad. If it weren't for the fact that it is more an action game than an adventure- you'd be pulling the plug long before you could have gotten into it with any passion. For this very reason, it's also thoroughly entertaining - if really bad acting doesn't mortally offend you. While this has a lot to do with what kind of humour makes you smile, the dialogue in Resident Evil *will* make you laugh. "What is it?" cried the surly and buff Enrico. "What is it?" wailed the naive Jill. "It's blood," adds Enrico, his temples pulsing,





Cut scenes so bad, they're good, and the game isn't terrible either

showing the strain of coming to such a conclusion. Yes, crappy, yet highly entertaining dialogue, is strewn throughout Resident Evil. These come in the form of action or story sequences - where rather than cutting to a fully rendered cutscene, the controls become void, the camera takes on a mind of its own, and the characters start talking. Entertaining, though not in the way that Capcom had probably intended.

Like any B-grade horror flick, the story isn't worth much, but in context with the game, a bit of a help. You've gone with your elite enforcement team of S.T.A.R.S to examine a recent "situation". A couple of dizzyingly camera shots later (which imply you're being herded by some rather scary beast), you're inside a MASSIVE mansion. Members of your team are dying, there's a really bad smell, and anything with out any comprehensible vocal abilities wants to take a swing at you. Not surprisingly, you want to haul ass out of there. So begins the adventure, run through rooms, blow away nasties (mind you, some of these are really nasty) with one of 3 weapons (dagger, gun, and shotgun), and sit through some really amusing cut scenes.



New fangled wonder-required

Resident Evil sure looks pretty, but it's no where near as pretty as what you'd expect as standard at the end of 1997. It's a graphics accelerated only game, so you're going to need one of those new fangled wonders to get things running. The major cards are supported, though this list is rather sparse. While you can see the effects of one of the said cards working on the game, you can't really see the thing being pushed to the limits at all. The characters look great and crisp, though the backgrounds look rather rough. Also, and this is a major annoyance in regards to gameplay, all objects that can be interacted with stand out from the backgrounds. This really foils any attempt to give us serious head scratching moments.

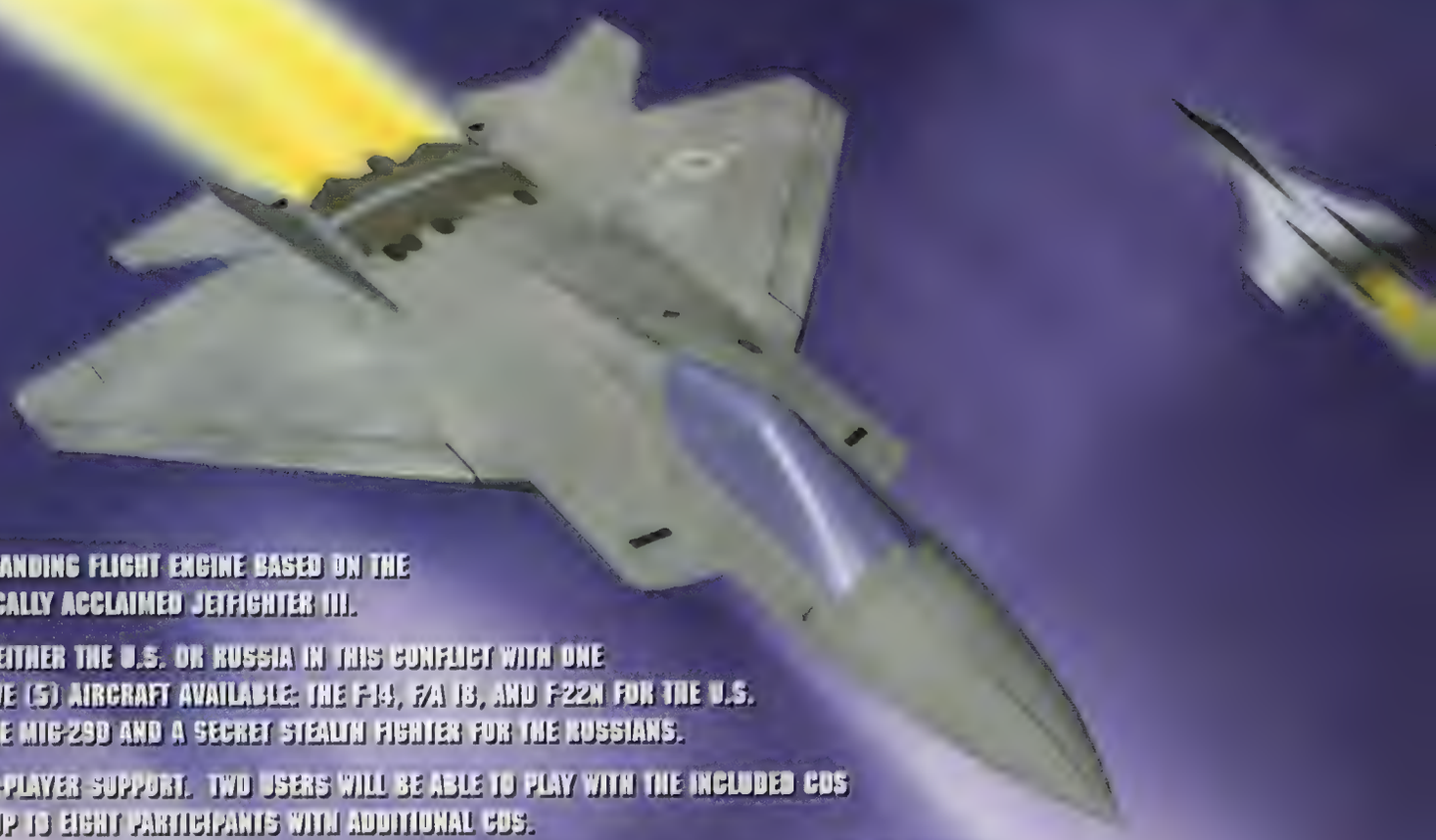
Resident Evil? A laugh, some fun, but not quite the game that'll have you clutching your knees in horror, or coming back for more to.

March Stepnik

74%

Category	Action Adventure
Players	1
Publisher	Capcom
Price	$TBA
Rating	M
Available	Now
For	It's hilarious! Entertainment central.
Against	Run from room to room, square to square, and be subject to the most contrived and coincidental plot development seen in a long time.
Need	P90, 16MB RAM, 2xCD-ROM, Direct-3D accelerator.
Want	P133, 32MB RAM, 4xCD-ROM.

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NHL '98

Forget the fact that Ice Hockey isn't exactly huge locally, this game is amazing, and hey, isn't that the important thing?



Lightning fast gameplay and oodles of gratuitous violence. Way cool!



Ice Hockey isn't the most Aussie of sports. Let's face it, the closest most of us get is watching Ice Hockey players involved in a huge brawl on one of those lame funniest moments of sport tele shows. It seems American flavoured sports sims such as Baseball and Gridiron are often destined for the dusty realms of the game shop bargain bins. Ice Hockey on the other hand concentrates on high speed and violence, two of the best things in life that aren't the sole domain of North America.

Gorgeous graphics

Being an EA Sports title, it's a no-brainer that NHL 98 features gorgeous graphics. Each year, their stable of games keeps getting better and better with 3D graphics bounding from all directions. NHL 98 features multiple camera views, complete with a TV quality smoothly scrolling ice rink. All of the players movements, from smashing into the glass barrier to high speed sprint skating are beautifully animated. All of this graphical glory can be yours... if you have a 3D card powered by the Voodoo chipset. If your PC isn't equipped with one... oh dear. An ice rink that looks as plain as the bottom of your bathtub and choppy gameplay that often makes skating a chore. The graphics can be stripped down in the options menu, allowing for better performance, but without a 3DFX card the magic just isn't there.

On the startup an announcer states "Welcome to the fastest game on Earth". This is to be taken literally. NHL 98 screams along at a monstrous pace at times. Sprint down the wing, pass to your star shooter and watch the puck (don't blink) rocket towards the net. Often the computer AI will initiate multiple player to player rebounds in an attempt on goal, only after you have become one with your joypad in a most spiritual sense will you have a hope of keeping up at times. Most of the game is played at either end in the attacking zones, with little defensive play in the mid-rink area. This is due to the ability of the players to skate at near speed of sound between attacking end zones. Another symptom of the speed emphasis in NHL, are the dozens of shots on goal in any one game. While it may not be the most realistic attribute, it makes for some fun and desperation around the goal area. To compensate for this, any difficulty setting above rookie has the goalies taking a rock hard stance in their duties. Scoring requires tricky manoeuvring and quite a bit of luck in hoping for the occasional goalie fumble. A nice trick is to try and get a second attacker in close, for when the goalie rebounds the puck instead of grabbing it after your shot.

Body slammer

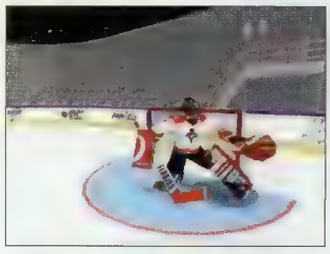
EA's inclusion of player stats, coaching strategies and the like are best treated as a bonus to what is essentially an arcade Hockey game. Being one goal down in the Stanley Cup final, with the clock counting down and desperately body slamming your way through the opposition defense in hope for the equalizer, it's real edge of the seat stuff. Sadly my dream of body checking Torvill and Dean into a wall continues to remain unrealized, but nonetheless NHL 98 is an excitement charged sports game.

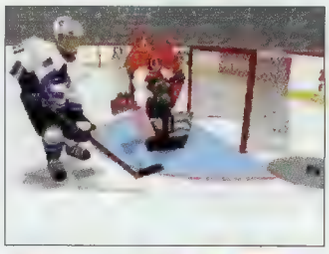
Pete Sharpe



Plus







PC PowerPlay GOLD 90%

Category	Sports
Players	1-8 (modem, LAN, same computer)
Publisher	EA Sports
Price	$79.95
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	Season, tournament and match play options. Presentation and graphics are top notch. Running commentary is superb, best ever in a sports game.
Against	Sometimes you wish the rink was twice as long, as too much of the game is played in the end zones.
Need	P90, 16Mb RAM, WIN95.
Want	P133, 32Mb RAM, 3DFX card, 4 button gamepad.

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VIRTUAL POOL 2

First we laughed, then we had a quick play, then a longer play... Now we can't stop playing. This game rocks!



8000 programming hours well spent

We've had the word virtual used a lot in the last decade - virtual this and virtual that. We all know this however to be just a buzz word, used to glorify something new on the cyber-scene. How many virtual-games are out there though, that actually come close to their real life counterparts?

Not many, that's for sure. With Virtual Pool we had a healthy alternative to pub pool. No more cigarette smoke, rancid livers and black eyes after a friendly disagreement over which rules both sides silently chose at the beginning of the game, or severe moments of embarrassment that occur when you bugger up a beautifully set up shot. True, there would be no real social interaction (unless you were networked in the same room, and excepting the quick call prior a modem game to your friend telling him to get ready), nor the sweet sensation of a long, cold, smooth cue resting between your legs, but sacrifices must be made. The point was, Virtual Pool was bloody close, too close even. It actually kept us inside and out of harms way playing it.



http://www.vrsports.com/

Total realism

Virtual Pool 2, feels much more like virtually realistic pool. Over 8000 programming hours were put in to this - and no matter how trivial this may sound, those 8000 hours must have been well spent because this game feels totally realistic. I mean, this is pool, with over twelve types of pool to play, six ways of playing them, three competition levels, adjustable table characteristics, fmv tutorials, and almost visually perfect (in high res modes). This is pool without wobbly tables, torn up felt, nor bottomless pockets. This is pool, that actually looks and sounds like the real thing. Forget what Virtual Pool looked like, VP2 is utterly amazing in the looks department. The lighting and shading on the balls is "oooh yeah, I don't need a real table now" realistic, and the tables themselves look great. When you play the shot, the sweet sound of bigs hitting smalls rings solidly throughout. Given the option to include a background room to the action, you can give the game that "really there" feel, though personally, we preferred the "lost in space" option of a free floating table. VP2 will support 3D acceleration (our review copy had this as the only feature yet to be implemented) - though we sing its praise having played without it! There's also a PPro and P2 optimization feature for those with the latest and greatest. This said though, you really do need a machine with grunt to run it. With high detail on a p150, things ran sluggish enough to cramp the beautiful engine. Taking the detail down kills the look a bit, so we have to wait and see how the 3D acceleration helps things along.



Perfect control

The most impressive new feature included in VP2 (there are 50 all up), is the new way of actually hitting the ball. Rather than using an automatic up and down meter like other sports games that require different power levels (like VP), the mouse is now used to give you the analogue power required for that perfect shot. Simply drag down to simulate the pull back, and push forward (slowly for light, quickly for power) to take the shot. Ingenious, and definitely feels much more realistic.

Well, there's little fault with Virtual Pool 2. Other than the obvious, this title will have you sitting at home for hours. It plays beautifully, looks amazing, and is totally addictive. It may even make you a better real-life pool player.

March Stepnik

PC PowerPlay GOLD 93%

Category	Sports
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Interplay
Price	$89.95
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	Virtual Pool 2 is just about everything you could want in a pool-sim, sans disgusting drunkards that don't take losing too well. Just get it.
Against	Not much. Really. We're still thinking...
Need	Pentium, 16 MB RAM, Direct X 5.0 and Win 95.
Want	P166, 32MB RAM, 4MB video card.

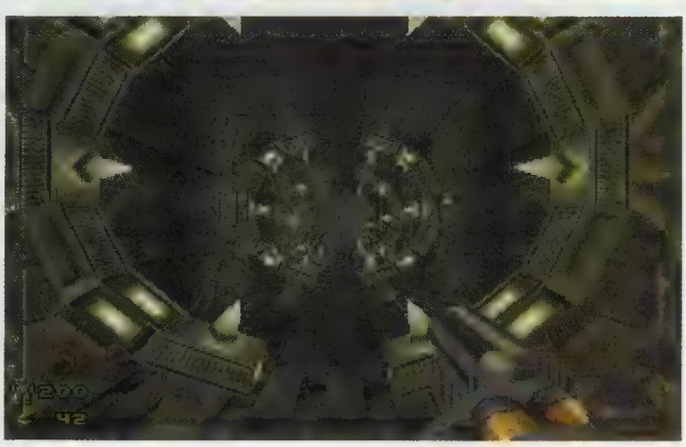

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CHASM: The Rift

It's a Doom clone, Jim, but not as we know it...



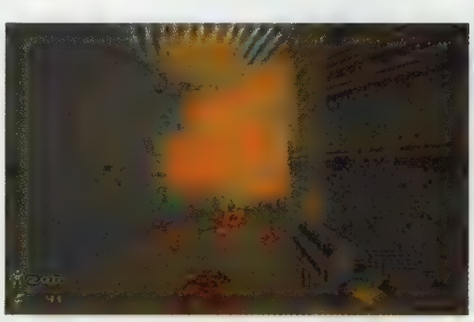
One word: 'inge-goddam-nuity'. Where the *!#@ has it gone?

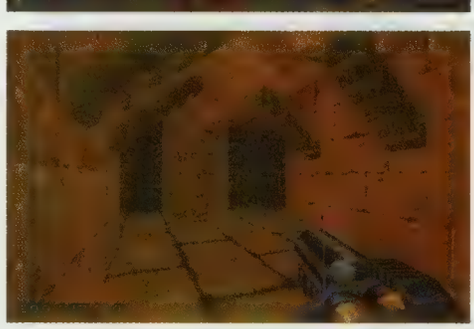


A space/time doorway opens, allowing hoards of nasty monster types the opportunity to invade Earth. One marine, equipped with a bad attitude and a shotgun has to fight his way through the onslaught so as we can all order fries and Coke without the fear of yet another apocalyptic inter-dimensional monster fest disaster. No, don't worry, you're not having the equivalent of a gamer LSD flashback, it's the Doom/Doom2/Quake storyline all over again. Let the flashbacks continue, because over 16 levels (split into four episodes), Chasm is basically a museum piece filled with every bit of imagery seen from our pleasant years playing the Doom to Quake saga.

45 degree 2.5D 3D

I love a shotgun as much as the next man, but right from the opening levels Chasm slips into "I'm a clone" mode. Little Quake type symbols on crates, crucifix symbology and monsters exploding into "Gibs"...the Ukrainian programming team behind Chasm must be Id Software groupies. Later episodes have an Egyptian and Medieval flavour but the Quake look is constant throughout the game, even down to the eye numbing over use of the colour brown. The Chasm engine is a strange mix between old and new. 3D textured polygons make up the monsters but everything else looks very flat as your viewpoint is restricted to 45 degrees when looking up and down. Shadow Warrior and Blood are also 2.5D games, but compete against the big 3D boys of action games because of their unique style and varied level environments. Chasm on the other hand goes out on a limb as it's hard to escape the feeling you are playing Quake's younger nephew minus the goodies of a 3D environment.





Shoot their arms off!

The monsters that populate Chasm are its best asset. Well it's more what you can do to them, that makes them special. Way back when Quake was in development it was sort of promised that blowing limbs off the bad guys would be a goer. Call me a peace loving guy if you will, but the hours I spent day dreaming of dismembering arms and legs, only to be disappointed by the no show of this feature in Quake. Fear not lovers of mutilation, for Chasm allows heads, arms and the occasional leg to be torn asunder. In the greatest tradition of Monty Python I aimed my trusty shotty at one poor monsters left arm, then right arm leaving him with the only option to run forward and bite me! Rabies was avoided as one nice shot between the eyes saw his head rolling down the corridor, definitely a moment to remember.

Amputations aside, Chasm falls short of being an inspiring 3D shooter. While the body count is high and roaming the corridors of military bases and medieval castles with deadly weaponry is fun we've already played Quake and Doom. In a time when Jedi Knight, Hexen 2 and multitudes of next generation 3D games have us all wide eyed, Chasm is too much of a blast from the past.

Pete Sharpe



http://www.megamed.com

60%

Category	3D shooter
Players	1-8 IPX Network
Publisher	Mega Media
Price	$TBA
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now
For	Level editor included. Fast paced. Blowing limbs off enemies rivals your first ever pizza as a hallowed event.
Against	Imitation is flattery, but Chasm goes too far.
Need	486DX4/100, 16Mb RAM, DOS 5.0
Want	P133

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Speedboat Attack

CATEGORY	Racing
PLAYERS	1-6
PUBLISHER	Telstar Electronic Studios
PRICE	$TBA
RATING	G8+
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Win95, 2x CD-Rom drive, Mouse.
WANT	3dfx card, joystick, Valium.

overall

30%

Helps you kill time while you wait for Quake 2 commercial to come out. Makes your old 386 games look kinda cool.

Unfortunately, it seems that none of the development team for this game have ever set foot in a speedboat, let alone understand the physics involved. The fact that it is more difficult to turn at low speeds, and easier at high speeds are two depressing indications of the lack of information available to the designers. Your boat tends to skate all over the place, and slides for about ten metres in either direction with every tiny adjustment of your course, and generally behaves in an irritable fashion. Which helps you to run into the lansdscape as often as possible which is of an equal calibre to the sensational(not) physics engine.

The graphics for Speedboat attack are enhanced for 3Dfx out-of-the-box, which is a mouth-watering thought under any circumstances. Unfortunately this title loses points for lack of imagination in their application of the 3Dfx technology. The water surface has a completely opaque quality, virtually devoid of waves, and only certain stationary objects are reflected. Not to mention the tiresome sky texture, the flat-one-sided track markers and trashy wake animation composed of cheap, opaque, whitewash texture maps. In fact, for a 3Dfx enhanced game, the amount of objects rendered in 2D is just ridiculous.



Tops! Now instead of zooming round average courses in average cars/monster trucks, you can do it in a speedboat!

3Dfx aside, however, the sound samples in Speedboat attack are sadly repetitive and uninspired. The supposedly grunty water-speed machine you pilot makes a sound like a sick whipper-snipper being throttled, and the nauseatingly nasal American voice-overs have little if nothing to do with the race in progress, and are purely annoying. Not to mention the feeble effects your weapons generate, which are almost imperceptible amongst the throng of whipper-snipperish wailing. Which pretty much sums up their effectiveness. Despite having heavy-barrel miniguns installed in your boat, any target can withstand about 3 hours worth of direct hits at full auto without sinking or slowing down.

Speedboat Attack is a racing game with a standard sort of formula. Simplicity with enhanced 3D graphics. Which is fantastic if it's adequately designed. Unfortunately, this one is an absolute dog.

Eddie Dawson

Waterworld

CATEGORY	Real time strategy
PLAYERS	1
PUBLISHER	Interplay
PRICE	$TBA
RATING	G8+
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P90, 16Mb RAM, DOS 6.0/WIN95.
WANT	P133

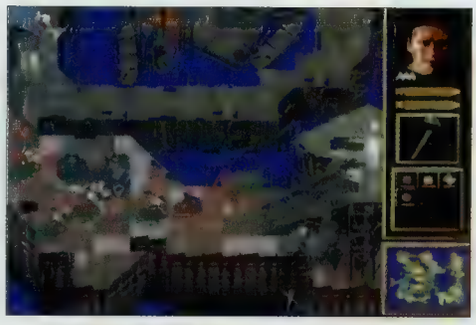
overall

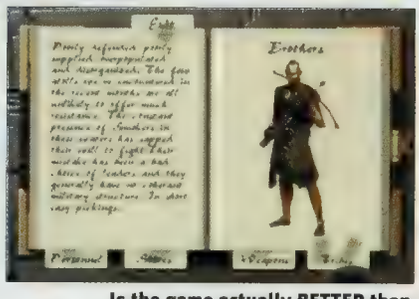
56%

Kevin Costner would like to forget Waterworld, and so will you after playing this.

The world is a nasty place. Global warming has resulted in biblical flood version 2. Mankind has descended into a tribal Mad Max lifestyle living on makeshift floating fortresses. Your tribe are a bunch of feral no-hopers seemingly condemned to drifting about on rowboats. It's a sad existence consisting of other tribes laughing as you float by, with the occasional man overboard being the only entertainment. That and games of I spy something, something starting with W. Hopefully after twenty two missions of death and destruction aquatic-style your people will gain their own permanent home away from the romance of rowboat living.

At the beginning of each mission you choose the men who will take part in the upcoming battle, and then deck them out with various weaponry from your stockpile. Weapons range from hammers, through to crossbows and shotguns but they aren't easy to acquire. You must trade metal and other valuables found during your combat engagements for the necessary arms or go without. The other important management task is keeping guys alive throughout your campaign so they gain strength and generally become more effective assets. Lose a veteran on a mission and you'll feel much more of a loss than when an Orc died in Warcraft 2.





Is the game actually BETTER than the movie? Will they recoup movie losses with game profits? Why didn't they listen to Noah?

Waterworld does a good job with mission planning and creating an increased awareness of your troops wellbeing, but once on the battlefield events take a drop in quality. Most skirmishes takes place on floating bases, and it's just a simple clickfest from start to finish. You group your men together and run around the base clicking on the enemy and hoping your shotguns, flame throwers etc beats whatever the enemy of the particular mission is armed with. This simple arcade attitude to real time strategy didn't wash in Z, and it quickly leads to boredom in Waterworld as well. The omission of multiplayer is the final straw in relegating Waterworld as yet another yawner in the real time strategy stakes.

Pete Sharpe

7th Legion

At first glance 7th Legion looks to be a pretty bog standard C&C clone, but there are some innovative differences which redeem the game somewhat.

It isn't big on resource management, instead 7th Legion concentrates upon the guts of war. Credits are assigned to you at different intervals, which you then use to build structures and troops. Building isn't a hard task however, simply click on what you want, and place it somewhere. Once you've built up a barracks, you then use some more money to 'buy' some troops, and then send them off to war. You might be thinking that it's essentially a tank rush game - build the most units in the least time and you'll win - well, it would be if it wasn't for the addition of random elements of chance. For starters, there's the scattering of crates lying around, with assorted powerups (faster movement, longer gun range, etc) which affect all the units around the crate. Then there's the deck of cards that are dealt out to you. In the top right corner of your screen at regular intervals, you'll have some cards made available to you, which can be 'played' when you feel it best. They do things like add stealth to one of your units, create a fog around a group of enemy units, and some even destroy large groups of enemy units and buildings. Now, I tend to find this terribly annoying - there's no skill involved at all. I think that elements such as this tend to completely ruin the strategy of building up and placing your units and base, but have to admit that it is fairly well integrated with the game, and as to whether you like it or not is pretty much a personal decision.

The graphics are nice, if not stunning, and the gameplay will appeal to those who find the strategy elements of games such as C&C boring, and just want to get straight into the ground war.





Lite on resource management so you can start fighting, fast

The missions are plentiful, well laid out, and the usual options are available for multiplay. In short, it's a decent game that is well worth playing, if you like that kind of thing.

Gareth Jones

CATEGORY	C&C Clone
PLAYERS	1-8
PUBLISHER	Microprose
PRICE	$TBA
RATING	TBA
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P100, Win '95, 16mb RAM, 4x CD
WANT	32mb RAM

overall

53%

A decent game that tries something a little different, and adds a bit of chance to the game. Whether you like that or not is up to you.



Monster Trucks

CATEGORY	Racing
PLAYERS	1-9 (hotseat play)
PUBLISHER	Psygnosis
PRICE	$TBA
RATING	G
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P120, 16Mb RAM, DOS6.22/WIN95
WANT	P133

overall

59%

Mundane but slightly enjoyable 4x4 action.

I've always had trouble getting into the mood of the monster truck scene. Maybe it's because I'm not an American and have never sat in a stadium full of Duff drinking hillbillies, chewing tobacco and yelling "Crush that car ye damned varmint". Besides, a standard sized Ute fitted out with tires that belong on a 747 passenger jet? Looks bloody stupid if the truth be told. But this is computer gaming, where even the most pointless of real life activities have a chance of being some fun. A monster truckin we shall go!





(left) Yes, that IS a monster Combi van. Strange but true

Three modes of racing are on tap, endurance, circuit racing and the rough and tumble of car crushing. Car crushing involves driving back and forth over a row of cars, the more damage you cause the more points you get. We are all on Earth for an average of 70 years or so, life is precious don't waste any of it on this woeful and incredibly dull excuse for an in game race option. Circuit racing is what you would expect. Choose a track and race around for three laps trying to bump and bruise your way through computer controlled trucks. Endurance racing is the pick of the bunch as it allows free range movement and diverse terrain to cross. You'll cross country race with a number of check points to aim for in between the start and finish line. Often you have to choose whether to try traversing a large hill or taking the longer way around, this also depends on what power/weight ratio you chose for a truck. Nice open style of competition, but with only four endurance tracks to speak of, you're going to have to stick with the ordinary circuit and crap car crushing modes to get your value for money out of this game.

Monster Trucks is one of those games that is fun for one night, and after that quickly forgotten. While the "Go anywhere" driving model is always good to see in such games, there just isn't enough to the game on the whole. Gear changes to add challenge in getting up inclines would have been nice. Maybe if they added rocket launchers and machine guns to it...Nah let's leave this one alone.

Pete Sharpe

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Daytona USA Deluxe

We reviewed the Sega's original PC conversion of their arcade classic earlier this year, and George gave it the thorough savaging that it truly deserved. Having no doubt realised that he was right, and that Daytona was indeed a colossal turkey, Sega have decided to make amends by releasing another version. Called Daytona USA Deluxe.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I read the word 'Deluxe' I start expecting something special, something that offers more than if it didn't have such blatant hyperbole suffixed to its title. Ever the optimist, I was hoping Daytona USA 'Deluxe' might be quite good. It saddens me to say, then, that this new version is actually several times WORSE than the first.

I won't even bother to mention to new bits (split-screen and network multiplayer support, options to fiddle with your car settings) because they go nowhere near compensating for the slash-your-wrists tragedy that is the Daytona driving engine. For a start, there is no 3D acceleration! Hello? Sega? Anyone home? It's nearly 1998, you know! The best detail level is 640x480 at 16-bit colour, as seen in the surrounding grabs. To get it running at a close to playable speed, however, you'll have to halve the resolution and suffer the chunkiest polygons in the world.





Daytona USA Deluxe - return of the 500 horsepower lint remover

Except, of course, it won't be playable at all. No matter which option you choose, no matter how ninja your PC is, you'll still have to put up with the game shuddering to a halt every few seconds. What will happen is the game will freeze (for a fraction of a second), you'll have just enough time to hear the thud as your car crashes, and the game will continue with you either off the track or driving in the wrong direction. Once I was approaching a tunnel, the game froze, jumped ahead tens of frames, leaving me on the OTHER SIDE of the tunnel going backwards and wondering what the hell happened.

Then there's the small matter of regular gaping holes in the scenery, a feeble driving model, engine noise that's less like a car and more like a lint-remover...

David Wildgoose

CATEGORY	Racing
PLAYERS	1-2 (plus network)
PUBLISHER	Sega
PRICE	STBA
RATING	G
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P90, 16Mb RAM, Win95
WANT	Moto Racer, GP2, CART, etc

overall

25%

Just a word to the wise, Sega, but you appear to have released a game three years too late - please don't let it happen again.







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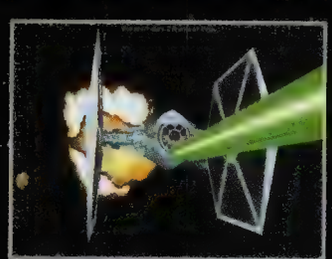
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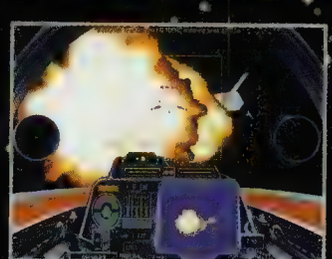
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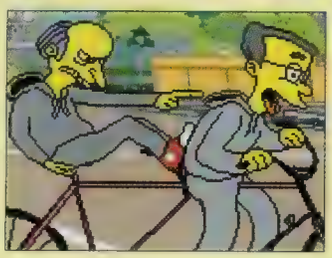


because it lets you fly for the Rebels or the Imperial Navy. With two new story-driven campaigns and cut scenes that dazzle the senses, you'll find your shorts wedged up at light speed. And watch out for Floyd. He hasn't exactly forgotten your last encounter.

Virtual Springfield

ELECTRONIC ARTS







Realise your greatest ambition! Be a Simpson! Yes kids, for the complete Simpsons experience get this, or alternatively, for a far more gratifying Simpsons dose, watch the TV show



Virtual bloody Springfield? Aye, I've placed my entire Simpsons video collection and other assorted paraphernalia into the safe. Why? Simply because The Simpsons is truly one of the wonders of nineties television, and this is a journey that will definitely keep we stolid viewers transfixed for a very generous period of time.

The main idea behind Virtual Springfield is to be able to go and do just about anything possible in a computerised version of Springfield. You can wander around Springfield Elementary, have a drink at Moe's Tavern and see just what's behind that counter, check out Monty Burns' executive bathroom or thoroughly explore the Simpson's household. That or just about anything else imaginable in the town of Springfield.

Before you start to grumble and whine, we too thought that clicking your way through a Springfield where the voice acting is oh so close but no where near close enough to the brilliant talent of the live show voice actors would kill the experience. Well, the one aspect that totally saves Virtual Springfield is just that. Fox Interactive enlisted the work of ALL the original actors from the show to provide the voice acting for Virtual Springfield. Anything less and this title would have been horrible.

So what's the point of Virtual Springfield? It's certainly not a game. The main appeal of Virtual Springfield is to wander about and sort of feel like you're in the middle of a real Springfield, where everything goes on around you, with the added bonus of finding out quite a few things that you may never have known about its inhabitants. You've got obscure references that only real Simpsons freaks will probably notice, as well as plenty of other hidden extras. You've also got a few token "games" to get around, and unfortunately, these don't break free of the typical tv/movie tie in entertainment-based norm. That is, they're dull, require no skill, and are generally best left alone.

While this title is comprehensive in bringing you Springfield-on-a-disc, it suffers that age old problem of storage space. With the order of this title being of a click on anything type play, many of the little animations are lame, dodgy and quite useless. Still, there's enough in here to keep you Simpsons fans coming back for more if you need the extra dosage of Groening genius.

March Stepnik



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Total Distortion

POP ROCKET

Ever felt the urge to make mega-bucks as a rock star ? Fulfil your most egotistical dreams with this space-funk adventure.

Your mission: To reach the dizzy height of Mega-Fame and the princely sum of thirteen million bucks in twelve days. Piece of piss, really.

Total Distortion is a very off-beat sort of Rock Star Strategy game. You waft about in a myst-like screen-clicky interface, filled with funky gadgets and crazy characters, trying to make a hit record and flog it to the masses the biggest way you can. This involves negotiation with record companies, media distributors and the authorities, while A: actually composing something sellable, and B: staying alive(!). Yes, in the funky Neo-future which is the weird world of Total Distortion you have to survive a virtually cut-throat industry, and literally cut-throat competitors who will gut you like a pig should they get their Gothic-fingerless-gloved hands on you. Yes, the Total Distortion world consists of deadpan humorless Government agents, cocaine-dusted advertising executive types and your utterly evil and dangerous competitor artistes.

Mix it up Dude!

Perhaps the coolest part of the game is the fantastic Deck which you use to assemble your "Media snaps" which will be the raw product you hock to the masses. These are Audio Track Mix/music video/3D graphics clip assemblies, which you have to cater towards your target market in order to squeeze the juiciest revenue out of the extremely drugged out population.







Although, admittedly, it's only cutting and pasting existing songs with tailored transitions, the sheer bulk of raw media you have to work with is just amazing. The samples available are halfway between serious compositions and a total spoof on the mediocrity and repetition in certain styles of music, which does strike a few familiar chords. But the simple kick out of chucking together your own weird music video, with crazy nonsense-art backgrounds and strobing effects with spinning 3D guitars that you can call all your own is really worth checking out. If you have any kind of creative/musical streak you will love just mucking about with the media editor and coming up with cool combinations of stuff.

If PCs, multimedia, and colour TV had been around in the sixties, Mick Jagger & John Lennon could have started their careers with this game! Maybe





Mildly humorous subtleties

Total Distortion was definitely never aimed at a mainstream audience, with mildly humorous subtleties which are only apparent to people who are on the same wavelength as the designers, which is that peculiar wavelength you achieve trying to walk in a straight line after 12 schooners of Guiness. All its weirdness, however it totally stands out as an original, well-created, memorable game.

Ed Dawson



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3D Winbench '97 Performance
at 640x480x16bit colour

3D FEATURES	VELOCITY 128	Millennium	Mystique
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Point-Sampled Texture Maps	•		•
Bilinear Texture Filtering	•		
Trilinear Texture Filtering	•		
Perspective Correction	•		•
MIP-Mapping	•		
Z-Buffering	•	•	•
Alpha Blending	•		
Video Texture Mapping	•		•
Fogging and Depth Cueing	•		
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SSI MTS-100 Multimedia Home Theatre System

Thrustmaster Millennium 3D

It's new, it's weird, it's unlike anything yet seen or dreamt of, it's not something you need, but you're probably going to want one anyway - yes, it's a new Thrustmaster. Looking like you regulation 4-button stick with hat and base throttle, the Thrustmaster Millennium 3D Interceptor (get someone you love to say that to you in a slow and sexy voice, magic!) features an all new thing. Bank from side to side and it flops over as expected, but climb or dive and instead of the expected movement, the thing sort of twists around the center of the hand piece so that it stays pointing straight up, but the base swivels forward and backward. It works, but we don't understand why such a thing is needed. Apparently it's done this way in the Space Shuttle. Well then! If the Americans use it in space then it must be the right, new way. Handle twist for rudder control is also built in, as is, we're sure, an Nth dimensional time-space vortex generator, although we couldn't find the switch for that. $199.95.

Just like the Americans use on the Space Shuttle



With the release of DVD drives onto the local market recently, and a growing awareness of the need for serious PC sound quality, the time is ripe for seriously good multimedia speaker kits, and the MTS-100 is a seriously good system, more than adequate for intensive and immersive game experiences. The system consists of two video shielded front speakers, one video shielded centre channel speaker, two surround channel speakers, and a subwoofer for those oh-so-necessary floor shaking double shotty blasts. The speakers have Dolby Pro Logic circuitry built in, which 'localises specific sound and directional cues', the end result being that sound is output so that sounds behind your avatar on-screen sound like they come from behind you.



A 5 speaker surround sound system made for PC games. About time!

It's not just a home cinema set-up bodged up and repackaged for the PC market either, they have actually taken into account the usual position of the PC in the home, and compensated with their set up. Nice, huh? They recommend that because the PC user is normally seated quite close to their monitor and speakers, the surround sound units are placed near the front pair, but positioned outwards so that the spatial qualities of the surround sound system end up 'wrapped around' the user. The middle unit is designed to sit atop the monitor, and the subwoofer (as per usual) sits on the floor underneath your desk. This isn't recommended in flats however...because you might end up with your below neighbours calling the police on you or something.

For those who understand all that decibel frequencies stuff and technical gobbledygook, go wild;

Standard Delay: 20ms

Signal to noise ratio: 8.5dB, all channels

Input Balance Range: 6dB auto sense, auto correct

Distortion: 0.1% typically

Test Tone: 2 seconds per channel

Subwoofer: Frequency range adjustable between 45-180Hz separate level control.

Amplification: 5 independent power amplifiers

More information from ***Sprinter on 9938 3388***

Imation SuperDisk LS-120 Drive

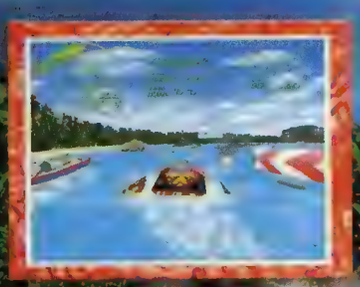
High capacity storage devices are just damn useful. With typical downloads from the net now well over the old 3 MB maximum, when the inevitable hard drive re-format happens, you're going to be one very unhappy pappy when you lose all the cool stuff that you had accumulated on your hard drive. Saving on to 1.44 MB floppy disks isn't very much fun. The Imation SuperDisk drive is one very nice thing to have if you deal in large files and plenty of them. With a storage capacity of 120 MB per disk, it's the largest storage medium currently available, and large enough to handle most of what you'd want it to. The attraction of this drive is that it's backwards compatible with the 1.44MB 3.5 inch floppy disks around today. The SuperDisk's measure 3.5 inch too, and the drive transfers data five times faster than standard disk drives. Single disks will set you back about $28 and the drive itself for $250 (with both an external and internal model. Call **Imation on 02 9479 9000.**



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ALLSTAR Electronic Studios

Infomedia InfoWave
Wireless communication system

It's new! It's sort of exciting! It's black, has cool lights and a funky looking antenna! How cool is that? OK, so it's not going to be for everyone, but for those who need something like it, it's pretty darn useful. The kind of people who would be interested in this, it seems, would be those living in one huge mother of a house with very few power sockets, or those in a multi computer house without network cards. Well, maybe that's a bit harsh. I'm sure a device such as this would come in very handy in lots of situations. For starters, you can connect up a printer, modem, another PC, a notebook, ethernet hub, or whatever you want, and transfer information wirelessly and securely at speeds of up to 170kbps over a distance of up to 50 metres. Not as fast as a network, sure, but still plenty fast enough for most things.



It works through your com port, with the usual serial (RS232) cable, and a serial or parallel port connection to the other infowave unit included in the kit. It's nice and simple to set up too, though swapping between using a wireless connection for a printer and a modem does involve a little fiddling around. It operates through a technique called 'Direct Sequence Method', which essentially means that a high frequency signal is spread into a wide band signal at one end, and then de-spread (that's the technical term, apparently) and noise-eliminated at the other end, and won't interfere with or be interfered by other signals such as CB radios, stereo's, cordless phones and the like. And then there's other wowee zowee benefits such as (as the blurb proudly proclaims) 'no monthly fees or set up charges!', which is in the running for 'most ludicrous PR statement of the year'. Other than that however, the InfoWave is a quality product that gets points both for its gee-whiz looks as well as its functionality. Retailing for around $499 (2 in the box), more information can be obtained from ***Creative on 02 9906 8887.***



Virtual Visor

Although the designers of these glasses don't like to admit it, the specs you're eyeing are Simuleyes clones - that is, through supported games they generate true stereoscopic images via rapidly flickering the LCD shutters which make up each lens. The concept is great, as evidenced by the widespread support Simuleyes has with game developers. Problem is, the refresh rate was low - around 60Hz, and as a result the images were a little blurred and sore eyes were a likely symptom.

Enter the Virtual Visor from Apec. Fully compatible with Simuleyes games, these babies will refresh at up to 120Hz, depending on what your monitor and video card are capable of.

For the gamer with everything, this should be considered the next thing on your shopping list. From Pactronics (07 3889 7177) for $199, which includes Descent, Whiplash and Slipstream 5000.

Ricoh RDC range

After the initial explosion of digital cameras, it's now the time when the fuss has subsided, and only the fittest survive. Ricoh have a very sexy looking range with practicality and class. Common to all three (standard with the RDC-300, optional with the other two) is the tiny LCD monitor to allow you to view and edit your images no matter where you are. All cameras also feature three image modes - fine, normal and economy. Fine places emphasis on quality and thus takes up most memory, normal is your standard and economy the smallest in size. The RDC-300 has an onboard storage capacity of 4 MB, which will allow over 100 economy images till you have to offload them onto your computer. Both the RDC-2 and the RCD-2E feature 2MB on board memory, and to compensate, have a PC flashcard slot built in. Flashcards are available in 5, 10 and 20 MB sizes. The RCD-2 also has the ability to record sound clips with the on board microphone for up to ten seconds at a time. Just too cool. Be engulfed by the exciting digital camera age!

(below) Trust us, Digital Cameras are very, very cool toys





Combine Monster 3D with Monster Sound and you'll experience "The Ultimate Gaming Experience!"

Diamond Multimedia make gaming so real it'll make you tense, anxious and screaming for more!



Are you ready to be chewed up, spat out and totally satisfied? Then brace yourself because the Diamond Monster 3D has arrived and it's about to blow your PC away with the ultimate in arcade-quality graphic performance.

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Monster 3D sets a new standard in 3D graphics performance with lightning-fast, full-screen 3D rendering and outrageous special effects, giving you gaming so real, it hurts. And, it's the fastest performing Microsoft Windows® 95 Direct3D accelerator available, with equally high-performance 3D in MS-DOS and Windows® 3.1x. Plus, Monster 3DXL comes bundled with Whiplash™/Fatal Racing™, VR/Actua Soccer™ '96, Descent™ II: Destination Quartzon 3D, MechWarrior® 2, Scorched Planet™, a Microsoft™ WIN 95 Sampler CD 2 and over fifteen other monstrous games that'll leave you begging for mercy.

And you better listen up, because if you're not experiencing Diamond Multimedia's outrageous Monster Sound 3D PCI sound card, you're really missing something. Monster Sound provides true CD-quality 3D positional audio—with up to 24 independent audio streams—and support for Microsoft's DirectSound and DirectSound 3D APIs. It also comes bundled with a suite of advanced audio applications. Monster Sound will do for your ears what Monster 3D does for your PC graphics.



Better run for cover, because the Monster Sound 3D & Monster 3D are coming to get you.

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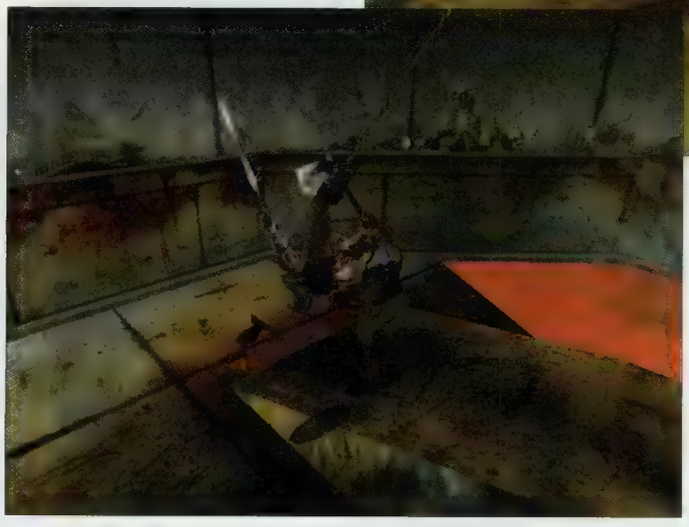
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Die by the Sword

You may recall that we mentioned Die by the Sword, a new 3rd person perspective game by Treyarch Invention only a brief while ago. Unfortunately too late for this month's cover CD, we received a playable demo that outlines the unique physics engine this game has to offer.



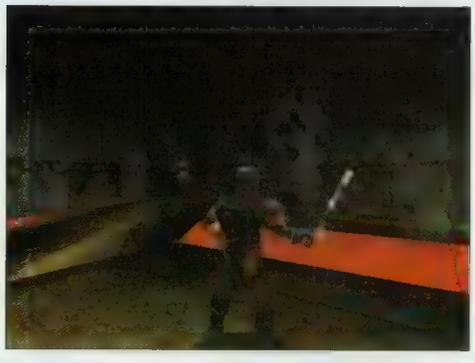
With support for the 3Dfx and Direct 3D compatible cards, Die by the Sword will be a 3rd person adventure/Role playing game in the style of Tomb Raider, but with some immensely exciting swordplay. The demo we had allows you to fight in a mock arena with a lava pit and small bridge with which to cross.

The main character you control in the game, a staunch warrior with a very cool Scottish accent isn't the best 3D object you've ever seen. But this isn't what Treyarch were trying to achieve with this game. Instead, it's the absolute realism of the characters and their movements. Instead of humans being motion captured and their moves programmed into the game, the revolutionary 3D engine actually has all the necessary real-time physics of the world programmed into it. This means that when you swing your sword and it clashes against your opponents, your character will react accordingly. That being whether the force of the oncoming blow knocks you to the side, causes your shoulder to roll or even throw you hard into the ground.

The penultimate reality of this engine though is with their VSIM (Virtual Sword in Motion?) interface. The VSIM actually allows you to control the arm of the on-screen character thrusting the sword up to block, or powerfully slashing across their midsection. The way the interface is used is either with a keyboard or a mouse. Although there seems to be a certain contention within the programming team on the use of the mouse over the keyboard, if you've played Quake with mouselook on, you'll find the mouse VSIM not only intuitive, but incredibly powerful.

Graphically, Die by the sword isn't that spectacular, but with the accelerator support freeing up more processor for the in game physics, this is definitely one to be on the look out for. Expect the demo on next month's Cover CD.

Die by the Sword- some of the best gratuitous body hackings ever- chop off arms! legs! heads!





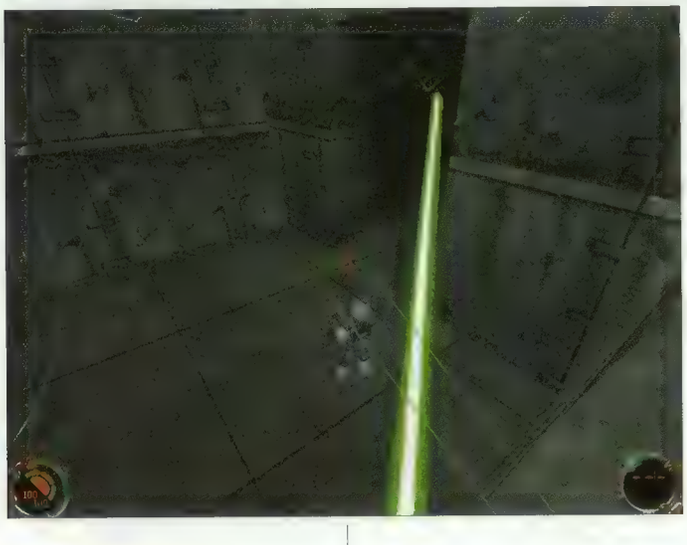
Need For Speed Special Edition

Included on this month's cover CD is Need for Speed Special Edition demo for the 3Dfx.

If you don't have a 3Dfx and loved NFS 1 or 2, it's worth getting a 3Dfx just for this demo. The course is super fast, and features some utterly brilliant effects such as rain, that when it hits your windscreen, actually causes the droplets to splatter.

Other memorable moments include charging through the underground section towards a pool of lava. Using a combination of orange specular lighting and fog, you actually see the glow from the lava ahead, the effects is absolutely spectacular. Also, a first in the 3Dfx world, NFSSE completely distance draws. That is to say, you never see any objects being blitted onto the track in the far distance, object scenery is just always there.





Jedi Knight- maybe it's not the 3D masterpiece we first thought. Still plays good though!

Jedi Knight - Dark Forces II

The long awaited one from Lucasarts. Gameplay issues aside, in 3D Technews, we like to look at the aspects that make a game particularly exciting from the perspective of 3D graphics and its advancements. To which it must be said that Jedi Knight isn't a 3D masterpiece at all.

Within the game, there are definitely some incredible 3D moments, such as standing on the edge of a ledge to look down and see a literally endless drop, or jumping onto the thin protrusions of a giant fork suspended high above a city. But graphically, Jedi is rather poor.

The first reality about Jedi is that it features only an 8-bit palette. 3D accelerators may help with effects such as bilinear filtering, but you're constantly aware of a certain blandness to the colours, particularly on the 3Dfx. Other points of criticism are with the lightsabre and weapon fire. With other games such as G-Police and Terracide using translucent maps to create a powerful glowing effect, you can easily imagine how much more exciting it could have been to be waving around a translucent light sabre that left a momentary afterglow after you swung it. As it stands now, all the weapons fire in Jedi lack lustre .The only other point of criticism that could be offered are that the in game characters are painfully blocky and the levels all seem too boxy. In Jedi's defence however, the sets in Star Wars are portrayed as a sterile boxed in environment, however there are many other locations that you travel to in this game where everything didn't need to be so flat.

Nintendo 64 Emulator

Issues of legality shoved abruptly by the side, an intrepid bunch of programmers on the Net are currently writing a Nintendo 64 emulator for the 3Dfx. In an effort to be compatible though, the programmers plans are to use a subset of Direct3D known as DrawPrimitive. They can use their own 3D engine to perform transformations, and call rasterisation through DrawPrimitive, which will work with any card that supports Direct3D.

No doubt as soon as Nintendo catch wind of this, every effort will be made to put a stop to it. But with the slow legal process, you can be sure I'll try and throw a beta version on the cover CD when it's ready, before an official injunction is put in place.

Quick Byte

Starship Troopers - Microprose: Anyone who read Heinlein's book of the same name knew that it was a story just crying out to be a computer game. Although many thought the avenue of Real Time Strategy would be appropriate, Microprose have opted for a 3rd person shooter instead. This game will rock, with more than 100 polygonal `bugs' on screen at once and other `tricks' to make it look like even more, you'll feel swarmed. Also, like scenes from the new movie and from the book, you'll see thousands of bugs coming at you, and can kill thousands at a time. Just when you think you've wiped them all out though, thousands more will come at you. This highly anticipated 3Dfx title with offer complete distant draw and rolling terrain, you will be able to see up to 5 miles away. - for 3Dfx Glide.

NEC vs 3Dfx

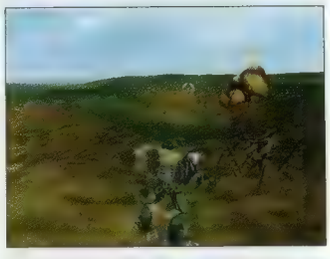
Smarting from the recent turn in Sega to go with the Power VR chipset as opposed to the 3Dfx, Voodoo have decided to litigate. In the lawsuit 3Dfx alleges that NEC and VideoLogic "induced" Sega to breach its agreement with 3Dfx. The directors of VideoLogic believe these claims are entirely baseless and without merit and will defend the action alongside Sega and NEC. Sega has publicly denied and refuted claims by 3Dfx, and intends to aggressively defend the action.

Jere Lawrence

(below) Starship Troopers









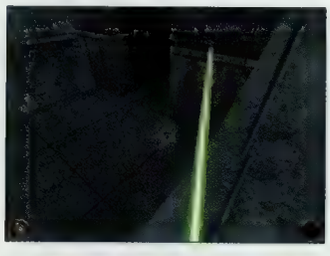
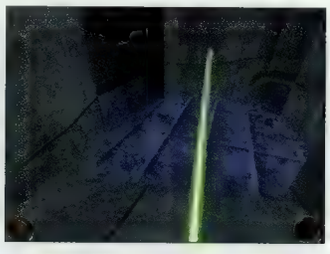
Diamond V330

The Diamond V3300 is fast, very, very fast. Word has been around from John Carmack himself to be on the lookout for the Riva chipset. Never to dare doubt him, he was right. Benchmarking at 40% faster then a 3Dfx it is a truly head turning card. It doesn't just blitz its 3D competition either, the 2D score although not as significant an increase over the 3D also beats the previous title holder (of one month only) the Apocalypse 5D. Being a combo card, the V330 is easy to install. Replacing your current video card, there's no need for pass through cables or other form of external device.

Upgradability is also built into the V330 which keeps the cost down for a low end version with upward scalability. This is a welcome feature as one of the problems with current DVD solutions is that they're bundled with obtrusive, slot using, inefficient decompression cards. With the V330 however, you need only apply the upgrade daughterboard for DVD decompression, TV tuning, video capture and SVHS output to your TV. This actually places the V330 as the first available all-in-one DVD solution and therefore the only Video card worth endorsing a DVD drive for.

Diamond drivers...

It's a shame all this praise has to come to a stop though, for just when you think Diamond were getting their act together, they release another set of appalling drivers with one of their products. Although there's nothing wrong with the installation of the drivers, the prebundled In-control tools are a totally non-functional waste of time. The most frustrating of which being the screen centring utility. Those of us with analog monitors know the joy of dial twiddling each time a resolution is changed. With modern video cards however came utilities that allowed the video card to remember the monitors center for you. This allowed you to set it up once and have almost identical functionality to digital monitor owners. The V330 drivers incorporate such a utility, however after setting the centre point and applying/saving the changes, the next time you change resolution, it will be all forgotten, rendering the utility absolutely useless. Sigh.




(above) Jedi Knight and Overboard with the Riva *Note: Overboard is called Shipwreckers in the US*




(above) Overboard 3Dfx

BENCHTEST
DIAMOND V330

Chipset: NVidia Riva 128 3D chipset

3D functionality: Mip Mapping, Bi/Trilinear filtering, Perspective Correction, Specular Highlights, Texture Mapping, Transparency/Translucency and Z-Buffering.
Memory: 4Mb SGRAM
Included Software: Win 98 drivers (!), F-22 Raptor, MDK: Mission Laguna Beach, Moto Racer, Photo Suite, Web 3D, VR Creator, MPEG player.
Price: $429.00

Powerbench 2D: 55.6833
Powerbench 3D: 74.2239
Powerbench: 64.9536

Comparison

	2D	3D	Overall
Fastest card: Apocalypse 5D	52.0645	57.7751	54.9197
Fastest 3Dfx: Orchid Righteous			53.0548
Current card: Viper v3300	55.6833	74.2239	64.9536
Slowest card: Canopus	30.3089	23.1071	26.0708

The V330 is the new first place holder at **64.9536**!

The threat of under utilisation

There is no doubt the Riva is fast. Definitely no doubt. In Jedi Knight at a resolution of 800 x 600 (a resolution not available to the 3Dfx), the game never misses a beat. No matter how many enemies, or how complex the scene is, it is always phenomenally fast. Likewise however, the 3Dfx at 640 x 480 also never missed a beat. Which actually causes quite a dilemma. All the raw power of the Riva will only be handy if a program actually attempts to generate numerous polygonal objects, render very far into the distance or run at a higher resolution. The question remains to be answered though, that if the 3Dfx is the most popular card, will developers actually try and push the envelope, ignoring the large Voodoo install base, or will their products be refined to run for a slower 3Dfx, leaving all that extra Riva power under-utilised? On that note, there isn't any specific Riva software yet, nor much comment on support leaving developer's lips. Only time will provide the answer.

The graphical dilemma

Despite a gripe concerning some poor drivers on Diamond's part, the Riva is deserving of extremely high praise for its speed, but there is still one factor that may cause this card some lacking popularity: the matter of its colours and palletising. It's unlikely the comparative screenshots reproduced onto print paper will be able to display the problem, but the graphical output of the Riva, in terms of colour, has a "dirty edge" to it. In Overboard for example, where the 3Dfx features crystal clear translucent water, the same translucent texture on the Riva, although still translucent, featured black pixelisation or dithering over it. Like ash had been flicked over the scene. We weren't looking for faults in the card either, it was obvious to anyone who had played the 3Dfx version previously.

Ultimately, within the 3D world it's progressed from the top 2, to the top 3. The Power VR2 is still in front in terms of colouring and object texturing. The 3Dfx is the most popular card and has a massive install base. But the Riva is by far the fastest and just waiting for that 900,000 plus polygon game for it to really shine.

With fast 2D, and incredibly fast 3D the Riva is a worthy buy. However, you're only going to be able to play Direct 3D/OpenGL games on it. The 3Dfx with its many proprietary software titles is still rather attractive.

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The Microprocessor Forum '97 Report

Introducing the 3D CPU

Gary Wallis

The Microprocessor forum is an event that is held every year, allowing the hi-tech giants to tell everyone about their latest technologies. Many people gather around to hear the speakers talk of their new and wonderful technologies with the eagerness of a child at Christmas time. The second day of the forum was the most exciting, as the three major x86 chip vendors, Intel, AMD, and Cyrix announced their up and coming silicon wonders. These wonderful people certainly have some amazing new technologies in the pipeline that will make any gamer drool.

Intel

Intel had quite a bit to say regarding their new IA-64 instruction set that is being jointly co-developed with Hewlett-Packard. This new instruction set will debut first in the Merced processor from Intel. What sets this instruction set apart from the rest is the fact that it is build on a different computing model. Eh? What I mean by this is that a processor is usually either based around the CISC (Complex Instruction Set Computing) or RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computing) architectures. Not the IA-64 instruction set. This will employ a new scheme called EPIC (Explicitly Parallel Instruction Computing). The concept behind EPIC is quite involved, so I will provide you with a complete overview of the IA-64 and EPIC in a future article.

Intel also detailed their plans for the Pentium II and Deschute. The Deschute CPU will come in two flavours - a Slot 1 and a Slot 2 version. The Slot 1 version of the Deschute will start at around 333MHz at a bus speed of 66MHz and then move to 350 and 400MHz versions with a 100MHz bus speed by the middle of 1998. The Slot 2 version of the Deschute which will be released in a 100MHz bus speed version only and will debut at 400MHz sometime in the second half of 1998.

AMD

Wow... AMD have outdone themselves with their latest announcements. In the first half of 1998 AMD plan to unleash their next processor onto the x86 market. Titled the AMD K63D, by its name you may have guessed what this processor packs. Yep, you guessed it AMD will incorporate new instruction set extensions for performing 3D into their mainstream K6 processor. These 24 new instructions will accelerate floating-point computations and allow multiple floating-point instructions to execute in parallel. The enhancements don't stop there as AMD will also include a super-scalar MMX unit, that has dual decode and dual execution pipelines. This will increase the MMX performance of the K6 considerably. I hope that AMD's 3D extensions will be widely supported, because AMD have not enhanced the K6's FPU at all. The K63D will also feature a 100MHz bus speed but this will need a new Socket 7 specification called Super 7 which will run at 100MHz bus speed and also include support for AGP.

The K6+ 3D processor is to be introduced sometime in the second half of 1998 and sounds very cool indeed. The K6+ 3D will feature on-chip level 2 cache of 256KB, which unlike the



Pentium Pro's will be part of the K6 die itself. This will then effectively make the motherboard cache memory into level 3 cache and should provide massive speed increases. This CPU is going to be very fast and is also Socket 7 compatible too, a definite candidate for the ultimate games playing CPU. The K6 + 3D will start at 350MHz and move to 400MHz versions soon after, and will contain a whopping 21.3 million transistors.

AMD also gave us a small glimpse of their seventh generation processor the K7. This will debut sometime in 1999, it will use Intel's slot 1 technology, and should hit the scene at a massive 500MHz!

Cyrix

Cyrix announced its next incarnation of the 6x86MX, code named 'Cayenne' and is planned for shipment sometime in the second half of 1998. Finally, Cyrix will do something about the weak FPU performance of their CPU's. The Cayenne will have a pipelined, dual issue FPU that will be around 2 to 3 times better than their current offering. They will also include 3D enhancements a bit like AMD's 3D extensions, dubbed 'MMFP' instructions. What these instructions can do is perform floating-point calculations at very high speeds (great for 3D games). The estimated peak performance of these enhanced MMX instructions are as high as a GFLOP (that's 1 Billion floating point operations per second!).

Cyrix also announced its plans to incorporate a 100MHz-bus speed on the 6x86MX processors in the first half of 1998 as well as increasing the processor speeds to PR266 and beyond. The next generation CPU from Cyrix is code-named the MXi will be the first CPU to use the Cayenne architecture. This processor will bring amazing performance to 2D and 3D applications and will debut sometime in the second half of 1998 at PR300 and PR400 versions.

K63D, Cayenne, Deschute

I can now sleep better at night knowing that next year gamer's dreams will come true. I just can't wait to see whether AMD's new CPU's live up to expectation. Although I can't see Intel giving in to AMD that easily, the MMX-2 instruction extensions will no doubt incorporate some 3D capabilities. Hopefully all three 3D-chipset extensions can live together in harmony. These new CPU's will bring games that are capable of producing very high quality 3D graphics that will make current 3D games look primitive in comparison.

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ROADSHOW INTERACTIVE

ELSTAR

IRQ Overload

When multimedia hits the Intel wall

Jere Lawrence

See that brand spanking new Pentium II 266 over there? We're celebrating because it's 18 years old. It's old enough to drive, vote and drink, and I bet you thought it was all the latest in technology, didn't you?

Well, I hate to tell you this, but inside this roaring thrashing beast of a machine is an antiquated system designed back in the 1970's to allow access to plug-in hardware. The disease is called Interrupt ReQuest levels or IRQ's, and with no cure in sight, they're bad news to the modern games player.

How did this happen??!!

Back in the early eighties, and to an extent, the early nineties, IRQ's we're really not a problem at all. The average machine had a floppy drive, hard drive, video card and 2 com ports. With the mouse plugged into Com 1 there were more then enough IRQ's left for that SCSI card or Bus mouse.

Then Multimedia appeared. CD ROM's, Sound cards, Midi cards, SCSI CD ROM's. We all gasped when we heard our first sound sample playing in a game, and then cursed numerous expletives whilst we tried to install the damn things.

Even back then IRQ's were a problem, though it was often something as simple as the default IRQ conflicting with your printer. These days however, something far worse has occurred. We've basically run out!!

The Big Squeeze

This is a list of all the IRQ's in a PC without any additional Multi-media devices.

2 - Reserved for EGA/VGA adapter. Can't use
3 - Com2, Com4
4 - Com1, Com3
5 - Available / Default for LPT2
6 - Floppy Disk Controller
7 - LPT1 Printer Port
8 - Real Time Clock Can't be used
9 - Cascaded IRQ 2. Can be used in some circumstances.
10 - Available
11 - Available
12 - Bus Mouse (Cannot be disabled on some modern motherboards)
13 - Math coprocessor
14 - Hard Disk controller 1
15 - Hard Disk controller 2

Looking at that chart, we can see that you essentially have IRQ's 5,10 and 11 available for use in your home machine.

Take this real life situation from one of my own experiences for example. You have an Apocalypse 5D video card, 3Dfx, Monster Sound 3D, AWE 32, SCSI card and a Network card. That's 6 devices with only 3 IRQ's available. What are you going to do?

Luckily, the 3Dfx doesn't use an interrupt, so we're in the clear there. The 5D being a primary video card goes in, IRQ 10 (for the Power VR) is gone. Next is the AWE 32 - IRQ 5 is gone. In goes the Monster Sound 3D and IRQ 11 is gone. Leaving the Network card and SCSI card unusable.

It is possible to get all these cards working, but at a number of sacrifices and a lot more time fiddling. Compare the previous table to this one, with all the functioning cards.

2 - Reserved for EGA/VGA adapter. Can't use
3 - Com2, Com4
*** 4 - Network Card**
***5 - AWE 32**
6 - Floppy Disk Controller
7 - LPT1 Printer Port
8 - Real Time Clock Can't be used
*** 9 - Cascaded IRQ 2. Can be used in some circumstances - Apocalypse 5D**
*** 10 - Monster Sound 3D**
*** 11 - SCSI Card**
12 - Bus Mouse (Cannot be disabled on some modern motherboards)
13 - Math coprocessor
14 - Hard Disk controller 1
15 - Hard Disk controller 2
**** 3Dfx doesn't use an interrupt.**

In this instance, the 5D was polite enough to work on the cascaded IRQ 9. But you can't expect this from all cards. Either way, from this situation, I have lost the use of my Com 1 and had to fork out the money for a bus mouse to make amends.

So, what can be done about this problem?

We made every effort to contact Intel regarding this matter. Rang them every day without fail only to be told "they'd get back to us". They didn't! Was the question too hard? We don't think so.

Obviously Intel feel that PC PowerPlay, and therefore its readers, aren't worthy of their time. We suggest you ring the main switchboard on (02) 9937 5800 and ask them yourself. Perhaps you'll get an answer. If you do and feel so inclined, send me an email (jerel@next.com.au) with what they said.

The Future?

So what of the future? If the soon to be 3Dfx 2 is unlike its predecessor and uses an IRQ, then we're in for some trouble. These babies can work in pairs. (I.e. 2 in one machine doubles the performance) virtually stripping the ability of your machine to use SCSI devices, scanners and the list goes on.

Ultimately as consumers, we only have our say when it comes to the wallet, but as more cool multimedia devices become available, this is a situation that will affect us more and more. Let us hope someone out there is paying attention and solving the problem as we speak.

Handy hints if you've run out of IRQ's

If you find yourself out of IRQ's, here's some things to try that just might help.

PCI Sharing: Like Plug and Pray, it's not a guarantee, but a function of the PCI system allows for IRQ Sharing. To enable it, go into your BIOS and set PCI to be level triggered, and not edge triggered.

Modify the System.ini: Open the system.ini file in the windows\system directory. Look for a line under [386Enh] that reads COMIRQSharing and set it to true. If the line is not there, add it. It should look like this.

[386Enh]
COMIRQSharing=true

Install Win95 B (OSR2) and Windows 98: Win95 Version B and Win98 can try and re-route PCI Interrupts to a single IRQ. To enable it, check the IRQ Steering Boxes in the PCI bus in Device Manager.

Deactivate the Com ports: The least graceful solutions, but if you have an internal modem and a bus mouse (on different IRQ's), then disable COM 1 and 2 allowing you 2 more IRQ's.

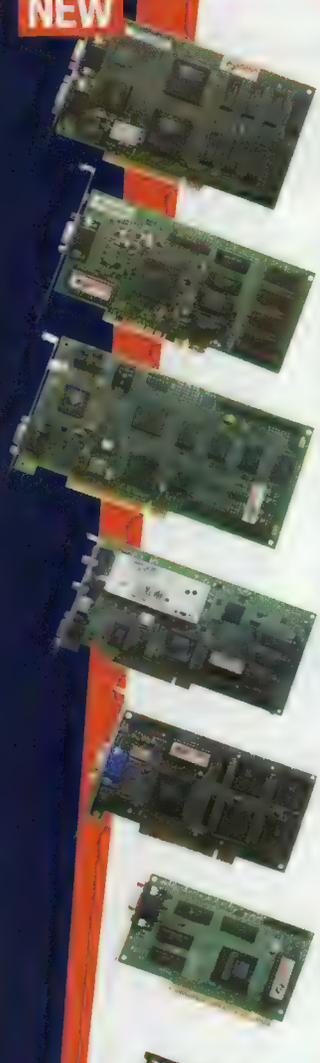
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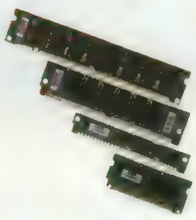
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THINK

This guide is broken down into two sections: rules of warfare and pinpoint strategies. The rules generally apply to any strategic game, and each is followed by a quick guide of what to build in your base. Learn them well and they will serve you well.

No unit tactics or side specifics are in this guide. The strategies in TA are many and varied — this guide is a supplement for your skill, not a replacement.



TOTAL A

RULE 1: WAR IS A RAVENOUS BABY SUCKING CONSTANTLY ON THE NIPPLE OF DEMAND.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

You are naught without a resource base. The success of any war pays homage to the resource base it depended on. So vital is your resource base that it makes, obviously, a major strategic target.

Defend it at all costs or lose. Likewise, remove the resource base of your enemy and watch their war engine grind to a halt. Keep this in mind at all times — strategic targets don't necessarily have to be large buildings with the word 'Nuke' painted on the side.

In TA resources come in two forms — metal and energy. Both can be produced by structures (this includes 'mining') or harvested from the landscape. Initially, harvesting biological matter or rocks can be a good boost to get you started, so while your base is getting on its feet, go shopping for resources.

The sun is free, use it. Throw down plenty of solar panels at the start of the game but don't clump them, line them up (lest you want to give your opponent easy targets). Wind generators are cheaper and quicker to build, but don't guarantee a constant flow. Build them if you feel the need for some variety. Tidal generators, like solar panels, are a relatively high powered reliable source — use them if you can.

Throw down metal extractors on all nearby metal veins you can see. Don't go too far looking for more. Yep, you heard right — the time wasted scouting for metal, then sending a constructor over to build, coupled with the extractor being undefended just isn't worth the effort. You've got plenty of power flowing in because you've built excess panels, haven't you? Use it, throw down metal makers.

This is especially important in the early stages of the game. Keep your base contained and defended, metal makers are an easy source of metal and can be turned off if energy is running low. Once your base is starting to get on its feet, and your initial scouts have found the odd metal vein nearby, then go throw down some more extractors. With a steady flow of resources coming in, you can then easily build turrets to defend these outlying extractors.

There are some maps that try to cause conflict among players by centralising metal and energy resources — don't fall for that trap. Let them fight over it, you don't need them. Energy is free anywhere on the map, and when you have energy, you have metal. Players fighting over a centralised resource location will weaken eachother while you grow strong. Besides, centralised resource zones make wonderful, compact, immobile nuking targets...

QUICK GUIDE STEP 1:

THROW DOWN 2-3 METAL EXTRACTORS, 6-8 PANELS, 2-3 METAL MAKERS AND ONE PLANT (KBOT, AIR, VEHICLE, ETC.) IN THE FIRST FEW MINUTES OF THE GAME.



THIS IS WHAT I CALL A 'BERTHA CAMP'. ON HIGH GROUND, HEAVILY DEFENDED AND COMPLETE WITH ITS OWN RADAR. THESE CAMPS ARE GAME WINNERS.



TAKE THE HIGH GROUND. UNITS HAVE A SIGHT AND SHOT ADVANTAGE OF THOSE BELOW THEM.

RULE 2: DEFENCE BEFORE OFFENCE

DEFENCE

Always defend first. Bar the heavy laser turrets, defences are cheap and quick to build. Surround your base in a mixture of defences and back it up with a few ground units. Don't

go intercept an oncoming force with your own army. Let them come to you, your defences will cut them down.

There is a school of thought which believes that offence is the best defence. All navies operate around this concept, and they do so because it works. Your enemy can't nuke you if you nuke him first. However there is a time and a place for such strategy, and while you'd prefer to be building offensive weaponry while building defensive, your resources may not stretch that far so soon.

The time for offence is when you can leave your base and not worry about its defence. Until then, pump out plenty of missile turrets and light/heavy laser turrets. If speed is a real issue in close maps, pump out units that can act as both a defensive and offensive army.

If you're playing experienced players, you'll need an anti-nuke (Protector for Arm, Fortitude for Core) up as soon as possible. As you begin to play with experienced players you'll realise that nukes aren't a worry anymore — everyone will have a defence. In this situation, nukes become a strategic art form — think hard and you'll find some very handy uses.

So how much defence is good defence? More is better than less — and remember, all defences are penetrable by a big enough force. You can increase their efficiency by giving them a longer line of sight (their attacking range exceeds their visual range) — send air support or ground units (PeeWees and A.Ks have longest sight range of ground units) on constant patrol around the outskirts of your base.



THE SHIFT KEY CAN QUEUE MOVEMENTS, CONSTRUCTION, ATTACK, GUARD AND PATROL ORDERS ALL AT ONCE, IN ANY ORDER.

then use both long range artillery and nukes. You can't just whack one down and expect to be sending friendly packets of uranium over to your enemy's base. First you must ensure your resources can handle the massive drain put on by both the building construction and the cost of shells and nuke missiles.

In order for a Big Bertha or Intimidator to fire, you must have around 1000 energy flowing or in storage. Similarly, a nuke missile will put a constant drain of around 1500 energy until the missile is complete, as will anti-nuke missiles.

It goes without saying you won't be doing either of these unless you've got a reactor down, which you will have because you took the words of wisdom in Rule 3 seriously.

Now, it's at about this time that you quickly realise one reactor isn't going to cut it. If you want to build both nuke and anti-nuke missiles at the same time, whilst still powering your base and perhaps a Bertha or Intimidator, you're going to need two reactors. If nothing else, the second reactor will be a backup in case your first is destroyed.

ANNIHILATION

PLAYGUIDE BY ASHTON MILLS



A GOOD DEFENSIVE LINE WILL KEEP YOU ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO RETALIATE IN FULL.

QUICK GUIDE, STEP 2:

LAY DOWN A CIRCLE OF MISSILE TURRETS AROUND YOUR BASE THEN INTERSPERSE HEAVY LASER TURRETS BETWEEN THEM. LITTER SURROUNDING AREAS WITH LIGHT LASERS DURING THIS PROCESS AND BUILD ANTI-AIR UNITS AND GROUND ASSAULT UNITS TO BEEF UP DEFENCES. THROW DOWN SOME HEAVY ARTILLERY AS WELL — THE GUARDIAN FOR ARM AND PUNISHER FOR CORE.

RULE 3: USE YOUR BIG 'UNS

BIG GUNS

Don't just sit around concentrating on units as a means of offence — use everything at your disposal. Without a doubt units are the core of your defence, offence, scout and support lines — but don't hesitate to complement them with the power of nukes and long range artillery. Single-handedly they can turn the tide of war and should never, ever, be underestimated.

The well balanced game design in TA means it takes a very long time to build and

QUICK GUIDE STEP 3:

INGREDIENTS: ONE NUKE, ONE ANTI-NUKE, ONE LONG RANGE ARTILLERY WEAPON. PLACE STRATEGICALLY AND KEEP SUPPLIED WITH ADEQUATE POWER. DON'T USE SPARINGLY. ENJOY THE LOOKS OF APPRECIATION YOUR FRIENDS DISPLAY.

RULE 4: MIX AND MATCH. THINK AND PLAN

COMBINED ARMS

Throughout rules 2 to 4 you should always be producing a variety of units. Depending on the map and your strategy, you will need to build units to defend, scout, repair, construct, jam and destroy.

Above all else you need to remember that TA's engine is so complex that no one unit type, or even unit class, can win a fight. You will NEED a variety of units, and even a variety of strategies, to win. If you unit rush anything, expect to lose.

As such it's best to choose two unit classes and concentrate on them. I.e, kbots and air,

or vehicles and kbots, and so on. You won't have time or the resources to build all unit classes and use them effectively. There are two exceptions to this rule:

• On water maps, you'd be foolish not to build a navy, so add that to your list.

• Air is always helpful. Even if you decide to concentrate on, say, vehicles and kbots, use air for scouting and harassment.

Similarly, adapt your strategies for your opponents. Playing someone who focuses heavily on air? Put up extra missile turrets and anti-air units. Patrol the skies near your base with your own fighters. Fighting someone who just loves Berthas? Scout the landscape constantly and stop them building Berthas in range. The most potent strategies are the obvious ones.

Remember, no one is undefeatable, no plan is fool proof, no defence is impenetrable and there is always, always, a victor.

QUICK GUIDE STEP 4:
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GO KICK SOME ASS!

STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

Ok, so you've got the concepts down pat. Now what about some nitty gritty details? Consider the following:

PRODUCTION AND BUILDING:

• At the start, build a plant and get it to produce two construction units followed by scouts. Build metal makers/extractors with one unit, solar panels with the other. When you have enough of each, set both to build defences — one missile, one laser. During this time, your commander can build your plants of choice or help out getting resources up.

• Don't build energy or metal storage, you don't need it. Your energy and metal reserves are almost always at a minimum because you're always producing. If they're not, you're wasting resources. Energy storage becomes useful once you have a reactor up, build one or two then. You should never need metal storage.

• Get two or three advanced construction units out as soon as possible. Set one to build a long range radar followed by a reactor. Set another to start on an anti-nuke or nuke. Keep an eye on your resources, it's generally wise to only work on two large projects at once, so get your extra advanced construction unit to build Moho Mines or help on projects.

• Take note that the commander builds fastest followed by advanced construction vehicles/kbots, standard construction vehicles/kbots and then construction aircraft. However, construction aircraft are most maneuverable, able to build anywhere you can see — keep this in mind.

• Who says you have to stay in one place? Create a secondary base elsewhere on the map — easily done in the early stages of the game. Just send off some construction units and build away. If possible, wait to build a few radar jammers and send them with it.

• Place important buildings (reactors, nukes etc.) at the edges of the playmap if possible. This way they will be furthest away from radar ranges, Bertha ranges, fly-by scouts and explosive ranges of nukes. Similarly, use the landscape as a defence — structures directly behind hills will be safe from artillery fire and be harder targets for bomber and fighter attacks.

• You can set default orders for plants so that produced units leave with appropriate firing and maneuver orders automatically set. Likewise, you can set up default patrol orders for plants and all produced units will automatically join the patrol.

FIGHTING:

• So your opponents have anti-nukes? Doesn't mean you can't use nukes. Target armies or navies forming on the map. Target fledging secondary bases trying to get on their feet. Losing a large land or sea battle? Send a nuke as a final blow and even the score. Anything but the anti-nuke defended base is viable.

• With this in mind, be sure to setup anti-nukes anywhere you start a secondary base. Setting up a Bertha camp, for example, without an anti-nuke or radar jammers is just asking for trouble.

• Don't suck up metal from wreckage of failed attacks against your base — the wreckage will act as a barrier in later assaults.

• Radar: Use it. You can target nukes, artillery and units with the radar just by 'A'ttacking and then selecting a dot on the minimap. Take note that nukes and artillery don't need line of sight or radar presence to attack — if you know where the base is, just click and watch the fireworks.

• The surest way to turn the tide is to set up a Bertha camp. Send jammers with a few contruction units and build a long range radar followed by a Bertha. Get the other units to build missile and laser defences. As soon as the Bertha is up, build an anti-nuke. Don't fire the Bertha till you have an anti-nuke missile ready. When you do fire, you can bet your Bertha camp is going to get some serious attention.

• Don't give your opponent time to think, continually harass them with ground or air units. Create small patrols with 'roam' orders and let them do what they enjoy.

• Knowledge is power — the more you can visually see or detect with radar, the more you'll know about their base and unit movements. Pair a mobile radar unit with a radar jammer and hide near enemy bases, outside visual range. Likewise, deny your enemy knowledge and be sure to jam your base and other encampments. Stagger missile towers on the outskirts of your base to prevent scouts from ever getting a look.

GENERAL:

• The SHIFT key is the most versatile key on your keyboard. You know it queues commands for units, but don't forget to use it to target multiple targets for artillery, set multiple waypoints for movement/patrol orders and for selecting multiple unit types, pressing CTRL-Z to select all units of each type and then ALT-<number> to quickly create a group of mixed units.

• Patrol: Construction units on patrol will suck up all resources in their path, if you need the excess resources, and automatically repair friendly units they come across. Patrolling attack units will, of course, attack enemies they find.

• Guard: Attack units set to guard will, of course, guard their target. Construction units set to guard a unit will follow it around and heal it if necessary. If sent to guard a plant, they will sit nearby and help in every production task the plant undertakes. If set to guard another construction unit, they will follow the unit around and help in any tasks the unit undertakes.

• Be sure to check effect ranges of anti-nukes and radar jammers — just click on the structure or unit, then CTRL-Z, and you'll see your total coverage.

• Ever wondered what a veteran unit gains? Increased weapon power, higher accuracy and more armour. Fear a veteran Big Bertha.

• Don't group structures, chained explosions can easily take out portions of your base. Try to keep reactors and nuke structures away from others — when these guys go up they take the surrounding area with them.

• Dragons teeth don't count towards your 200 unit limit (though all other structures do). Use them to hinder advances on your base.

COMMANDER CONSCIENCE

There are two realms of thought when it comes to the Commander option. Some players prefer 'Commander=continue' so that, like C&C and clones, you must wipe out a player totally to win the game. This is well and good, but it makes the Commander disposable. Beware players who 'Commander rush' in an attempt to take out your base with its death (and due to its high armour, and the fact that defences are automatic, will often succeed). Spurn all weak, cowardly and skilless players who do this. Don't try it on the Internet, 99% of TA players look down on this behaviour and you won't be popular.

The other option is for 'Commander=death'. You lose your commander, it's game over. This means he becomes a legitimate (but risky) tool to use in attack (the D-gun is the most powerful weapon in the game). But it can also drastically shorten a game if a commander is accidentally killed (say, by a nuke). Building up a vast and powerful base, only to lose because of one lucky shot, can be extremely annoying. If playing with this rule, protect your Commander. Remember he can be cloaked, but this uses 200 energy when stationary and 1000 energy when moving — you'll need power to support this.

Both game styles can be equally enjoyable, just make sure you set down ground rules where applicable before a game starts.

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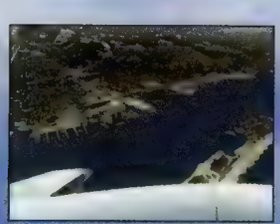
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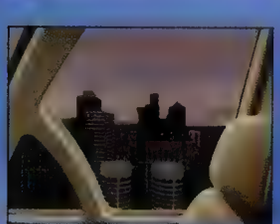
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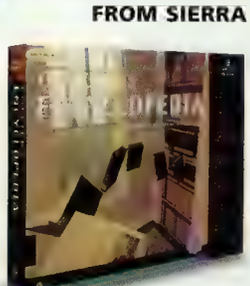
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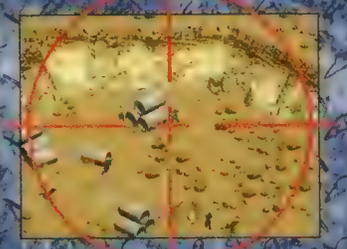
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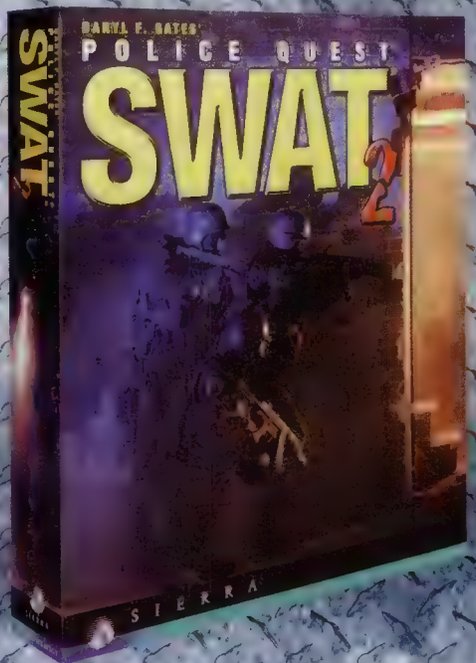






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WIREPLAY

Introducing Rolls Royce standards for online game services and fees...

It's what, somewhat sadly, was destined to happen. Huge companies with millions of dollars behind them are the only ones able to setup and maintain a large dedicated high speed gaming service. For so long it's been the BBS's with gaming services that have dominated the dedicated dial-up gaming services, along with a spattering of Internet-only services. Now that they've realised there might be money to be made from the situation, the big companies are weighing in. None, perhaps, are better positioned to enter into the gaming service arena than a Telco, and Telstra's Wireplay service has the hardware and technical know-how to get something of this nature working, and working well. However, other services are sure to give stiff competition to Wireplay, such as Multiplay's evolution with the integration of TEN, and it will be very interesting as to how the battle (as it is sure to be) between the two turns out. The differences between the two are fairly stark however, with Multiplay/TEN moving to an Internet-only service, and Wireplay utilising a closed network requiring a dial-in. For this month though, we're taking a close look at Telstra's new Wireplay service - what it is, how it works, and whether it's worth you, the gamer, investing your hard earned money.

BT Wireplay

Though it's new to Australia, Wireplay isn't a new service, and has been going on since April of 1996 in Britain, maintained and run by British Telecom. Telstra have signed a partnership agreement with BT for the Wireplay technology, and there are plans to link up the Wireplay services across the world in the future, creating a truly global gaming network - Wireplay thus far has been implemented in Great Britain and America (through MCI communications), and there are plans for other countries to join the fold as well. For the initial release of Wireplay in Australia, however, gamers will only be able to play against others from Melbourne or Sydney (though it's likely that this will be extended to other major metropolitan centres). Still, for the time being, this should be perfectly adequate - and all that most gamers expect.

Pure games network

So, the days of the BBS with a few modems for dial-ins would seem to be on the decline, especially once you consider the hardware that Telstra are putting in place, and the money they've outlayed to purchase it. They are using the Telstra backbone, predictably enough, so when a user dials-in they go through the usual PSTN switch, through (for Sydney callers) the Broadway exchange, and thence on to the 'pipe' (a series of ISDN lines) to the Melbourne servers. There are two servers in Melbourne, located under the ground beneath the Melbourne Telstra complex in what Telstra tells us is a 'bomb proof environment'. Isn't it nice to know that, should the Russki's move to more overt tactics in their efforts to take over the world (see our paranoid news story this issue) and nuke Australia, the survivors will still be able to play. Finally, someone recognises how serious we are about games! Anyway, there are two servers in the bomb complex - one serves as a noticeboard, and this is where all the meeting and exchanging of information between players takes place. The second serves as the router, and handles all the packets of the games between player's machines. The network is also 'scalable', which means that more bandwidth can be added if the user base grows to an extent that game performance is affected (for instance, more ISDN lines can be added if necessary). There are numerous other network related technologies, but in the end it all means faster data transfer between player's machines. BT's Wireplay averages at



around 110-120ms ping time between players, and Australia's service is expected to perform just as well, due in no small part to Wireplay's proprietary technology that they use for network data transfer - which is in laymans terms a sort of tweaked TCP/IP combined with tweaked IPX/SPX protocols.

High-speed and safe

Because it's a closed network (there's no internet access) issues that are so prevalent with internet gaming shouldn't be such a problem, like latency, packet loss and so on. Wireplay is dedicated purely to games, and the number of hops required for the packets to travel has been minimised. Along with this is Wireplay's stringent guidelines for the network configuration of each individual game. If a game has network (TCP/IP, IPX, etc) capabilities but they haven't been implemented well enough Wireplay won't make it available until it's either been fixed to their satisfaction or they've designed some of their own proprietary network code. As all avid gamers have found out (to their immense dissatisfaction), the network code is often one of the last things to go into a game and on many occasions has been...less than satisfactory, and with multiplay being such an important part of the contemporary game experience it's a very important issue. Kudo's to Wireplay, then, for taking a tough stance with games and network capabilities.





All the "big" games to kick it off, with new releases being added if they meet the specs

TA-friendly

So which games have passed the test thus far? Well, the newest, biggest and the best has to be Total Annihilation (which, apparently, just scraped through - and anyone who has attempted a multiplayer TCP/IP TA game will understand why). A word of caution though, for at least the initial release of TA, there was a menu option of using Wireplay from within TA itself - do not use this, it is for BT's Wireplay, and will not work in Australia. Other than that however, there are around 20 different games currently available, with others in the pipeline. At present you can choose from all these (including, where applicable, the shareware versions);

Duke Nukem 3D
Doom (in all its varieties)
Descent II
Netmech
Redneck Rampage
Actua Soccer
Big Red Racing
Euro 96
Nascar2
Comanche
Terminal Velocity
EF 2000
C&C
Warcraft 2
Fragile Allegiance

As well as this, there's also a variety of card and board games like chess, checkers, and so on - and maybe even a MUD! For those Quake addicts, fear not, for it's very likely that Quake (and maybe Quake2) will be available soon as well.

Call-back challenge

So they're offering a quality, fast, dedicated gaming network with a wide variety of games available, a well designed chat area with a variety of channels, and all the essential components for a cool gaming service. But wait shoppers, there's more! If you want to play a certain game, but can't find anyone willing to play you, you can leave a challenge open and then log off. Whenever anyone takes up your challenge, an automated response will be sent to you through the phone. Yep, you'll get a computer voice ringing you up and saying something like 'there is a challenge awaiting you on Wireplay' - now you've got to admit that's pretty cool. And worried parents can rest easy too, the client software comes with a comprehensive set of parental controls, including the ability to limit the amount of time per month the service can be used. All up, it's a great service, and we'll be very surprised if it doesn't succeed in the long term. Our advice to you at this point is that Wireplay is well worth at least a trial - we think you'll be very impressed with the professional setup and service.

I need this, how much though?

As to the pricing itself, a caveat has to be applied. Wireplay is a premium service, a lot of money has been outlayed to set the service up (with good result) but as such you're going to have to pay a premium fee. Even so, the fee structure does seem a little steep to us, and we won't be surprised if the structure is re-assessed in the near future. At present, there are a number of pricing plans, which are;

Introductory offer

(first month of subscription)

- ***$10 for five hours, with a fee of $5 per hour thereafter***
- ***Pay as you play***
- ***No subscription costs. $7 per hour***

Starter plan

- ***$15 per month for 3 hours access, $5.50 per hour thereafter***

Gamers plan

- ***$25 per month for 5 hours access, $5 per hour thereafter***

Clan plan

- ***10 or more gamers who sign up together are eligible for the Clan plan, which costs $25 per month for 6 hours of access, followed by $5 per hour thereafter.***

All plans carry these qualifiers;

Hourly rates are charged on a per minute basis, and do not include normal call charges. Unused hours are not transferable, and cannot be carried forward to the following month.

Gareth Jones

>q>a SETUP with Ashton Mills

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WHEN YOU WRITE, REMEMBER TO INCLUDE AS MUCH PERTINENT INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE. SEND YOUR CONFIG.SYS AND AUTOEXEC.BAT AND ANY ASSOCIATED *.INI FILES FOR WINDOWS THAT MIGHT TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM. GIVE ME AS DETAILED AN EXPLANATION AS YOU CAN AND BE SURE TO INCLUDE AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE ABOUT YOUR PC. FEEL FREE TO EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS OR, IF YOU WANT TO SNAIL MAIL, PLEASE REMEMBER TO WRITE CLEARLY OR BETTER STILL, PRINT YOUR LETTERS. PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE VOLUME OF MESSAGES WE RECEIVE, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE A RESPONSE TO YOUR QUERIES.

CLUSTER CONFUSION

>q I have a question for Ashton Mills. I noticed in issue 15 of PC PowerPlay (from now on referred to as the GAMING GRAIL) That F.O.T.M. article showing us your wares, also revealed a solution to an ongoing problem of mine, how to get Win 95b (OEM) and DOS 6.22 to run side by side on the one hard drive.

I have purchased a copy of System Commander to achieve this, but have so far not been able to get past the incompatability that the program has for the FAT32/16 difference between the two OS's.

Can you boot from a hard drive configured both for Win 95B /32 and DOS's /16 cluster size difference?

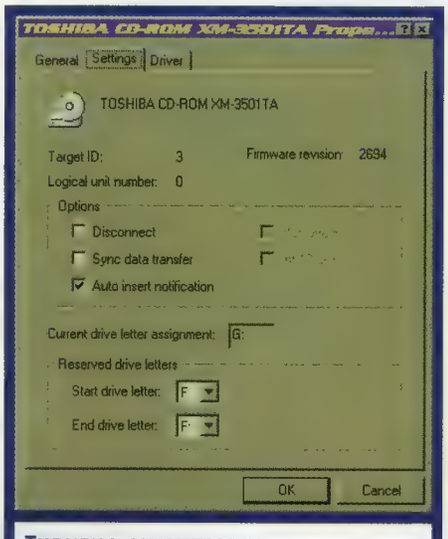
Any help would be greatly appreciated, (long live the grail).

Scott Kitchener

>a Scott, you can use System Commander to boot both Win 95B and DOS 6.22 from the same partition if you stick with FAT16 in Win95. DOS 6 uses FAT16 — if you choose to implement FAT32 from Win95B DOS won't be able to operate.

You have two options: Only use FAT16 with Win95 (i.e., don't FAT32 format your drive) and thereby install DOS 6.22 and Win95B on drive C: or create two primary partitions on your drive, placing Win95B with FAT32 in one and DOS 6.22 with FAT16 in the other. Each drive can only have one primary partition active at any one time, so one primary becomes 'hidden' while you boot the OS on the other primary. If you don't want to access files on your Windows drive whilst in DOS, or access files on your DOS drive whilst in Windows, then this is an easy solution.

Personally though, unless you're really tight for drive space and need the extra space FAT32 provides, I'd just stick with Win95B and DOS 6.22 both using FAT16 and both accessible from C:. FAT32 is slower than FAT16, so it's really a matter of choosing speed or space.



TURNING ON AUTORUN.

ALL WORSHIP BABYLON 5

Could you please tell me the font that the **>q** toolbar uses in some of your screenshots, like October's? Thanks

—=<jas>=

>a It's known as the Babylon 5 font, or technically, as Serpentine.

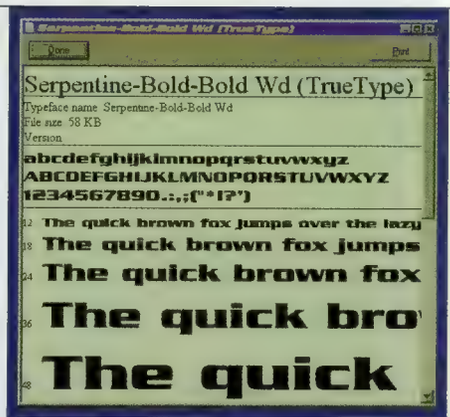
LOADED DOWN

>q When I first bought my computer about 2 months ago Windows 95 started up in about 5 seconds, if that. Now, with plenty of programs sitting on HDD and programs trying to load themselves at startup it now loads in about 20 seconds. I was wondering if there was anywhere in Win95 that displays what loads up on startup. Simply looking in the startup folder in the start menu doesn't work since some programs that appear in my system tray aren't in their and I know that other programs load themselves without displaying in the system tray.

On another topic, I currently have an S3 Virge and I am in the market for a 3Dfx card. The only problem is that there are many manufacturers that use the 3Dfx chipset and it's difficult to find any advertisements for them to compare prices and individual features and bundled software etc.

P.S. On a personal note, I'd like to tell those Win95 haters to grow up and accept the fact that Win95 is here and is a better OS then DOS. (in most respects anyway. I do agree with Ashton about file management in Win95.)

Tony Elliott



THE BABYLON 5 FONT. ALL HAIL BABYLON 5!

>a You tell em Tony!

There are a number of ways you can find out what's running during bootup. First and foremost is BOOTLOG.TXT, a hidden file in the root of your C:. It'll show what Windows is loading from a Windows perspective during bootup — very handy for debugging.

If you're looking to see what programs are being loaded at boot time, pressing CTRL-ALT-DEL will show Win95's task list. If there's anything running that you don't want running, track it down and find out where it's being loaded and why.

The Startup folder is the place where you'll find apps that have been installed to start when Win95 boots. Some of these may be listed in your task list, others may not. More often than not, programs that are being loaded at boot time that aren't present in your Startup are those that certain Windows drivers or programs will require to be present in order to operate, and as such you won't have a choice if these are loaded or not. Video drivers are a prime example, you'll find that on some cards one or two programs are constantly running in the background (often they handle fancy display options or features and can be safely killed).

As for the 3DFX question, performance and bundled software is pretty much the same across all cards — the biggest difference is price. Grab a copy of PC PowerPlay's Hot Hardware Guide for a full rundown on 3D cards, performance stats and prices included!

MISSING DDRAW.DLL

>q When I try to play games like Beasts and Bumpkins Demo, X-Wing, Monkey Island, Meat Puppet etc I receive a message like this: A required file ddraw.dll-could not be found.

Where can I get this file?

Michael Cross

>a You need to install DirectX. You'll find the latest version on this

month's CD. From now on you shouldn't consider a Windows 95 install complete until you've installed DirectX. Most games currently being released now need DirectX and won't run without it.

8-BIT COLOUR CAN'T CUT IT

>q I am having problems with my gaming. When I go to play a game it says I have to be in 256 color mode to play. I have been playing the same games before and they have worked okay.

So I went into the control panel, Display and the Settings I found then that my color palette was running under 16 color so I went to change it to 256 color but that is the only option to choose from when you click on the arrow for the list of different options.

I have been working my butt of trying to work out what's wrong PLEASE HELP ME, PLEASE.

Steven Pickering

>a Help is here! Well, sort of. Steven, considering you've been playing games fine before, I'd say someone's been tampering with your setup. The reason you've only got 16 colours available is because that's all the current installed driver can display. Easy solution: download and install the latest drivers for your video card.

MODEM MAYHEM

>q I have 2 problems I hope you can help with:

1. When I'm connecting to my Internet Server (Dynamite Internet) or my friends through Hyperterminal why, when I have an External voice/fax 33600 bps modem, does it connect at different speeds (28800 or even 14400).

2. Why doesn't my modem pick up! Mainly when we're playing Quake, or other things such as Hyperterminal, my modem can't distinguish Quake calls from normal phone calls, the phone just keeps ringing and my modem doesn't pick up! when I lift the actual phone it just sounds like it would had the modem picked, but in my ear. I've tried fiddling around with my modem configurations (I'm running under Win95) and I can ring my friends in Quake and it works, but it is really annoying! Please help.

Callum

>a 1) By default your modem is likely to be configured to connect at speeds of 33.6 and below. You will automatically connect at a slower speed if the receiving modem is only capable of a slower speed, or if other factors such as line noise cause the two modems to negotiate to a slower speed that they can handle. Normally for BBS or Web usage this is a good thing, but I can see why you'd want more speed for games.

The solution is to force the modem to connect at 33.6 only. Problem is, this won't save your phone bill. If your modem tries to connect at 33.6 and can't get that speed, it'll just hang up. You might spend a lot of money re-dialling just to get that extra speed. To force a 33.6 connect speed go hunting for your modem manual and look for a section on AT commands — different manufacturers have different commands for forcing connect speeds, there's no one general command to do it.

2) Your modem not answering is also a modem configurable setting. Depending on your modem configuration, it may not be set to pick up the phone at all. You can force you modem to answer the phone after a set number of rings by typing:

ATS0=n

Where 'n' is any value you want. Note that after issuing any of these commands if you want to save the changes permanently to your modem's memory issue the command:

AT&W

RUNNING AUTOPLAY

>q I am having a bit of trouble with my computer system in the fact that it won't autoplay my games CDs which are designed to, and my audio CD's will not autoplay even with the command highlighted. As a result, I have to use the "My Computer" icon to run Autoplay CD's like ARL96.

Please help me with this dilemma as it is driving me nuts.

J.Petry

>a You can enable (or disable) autorun by clicking Start —> Settings —> Control Panel —> System —> Device Manager —> CDROM. Double click on your CD-ROM and, under 'Settings', you should find an option called 'Auto Insert Notification'. This lets you toggle autorun on and off.

Random Access

Welcome to Random Access, a column dedicated to interesting, useful and informative tips about anything and everything to do with your PC. Be it hardware, software, DOS or Windows you'll find tips and tricks listed here every month. If you have some tips of your own you'd like to share with other gamers such as yourself feel free to send your tip into Setup and, if we publish it, we'll be sure to credit and print your name.

MSDOS.SYS

Right! Lets rip this re-invented file apart shall we? If you're interested in tailoring Win95's boot up, edit your MSDOS.SYS file in C:\ and add/change these settings as you desire:

BootDelay=[Seconds] **Default: 2**
Purpose: Sets the number of seconds the "Starting Windows" message remains on the screen.

BootFailSafe=[0/1] **Default: 0**
Purpose: Setting this to 1 forces your PC to boot in safe mode.

BootGUI=[0/1] **Default: 1**
Purpose: Set this to 0 if you want to boot a tailored CONFIG.SYS boot menu.

BootKeys=[0/1] **Default: 1**
Purpose: Set this to 1 in order to use function keys (F4, F5, F6 and F8) during boot.

BootMulti=[0/1] **Default: 0**
Purpose: Setting this to 0 disables multi-boot. Multi-boot allows you to boot your old DOS (if you elected to keep it during install) by pressing F4 or F8 during boot.

DBLSpace=[0/1] **Default: 1**
Purpose: Set this to 1 to allow the automatic loading of DBLSPACE.BIN.

DRVSpace=[0/1] **Default: 1**
Purpose: Set this to 1 to allow the automatic loading of DRVSPACE.BIN.

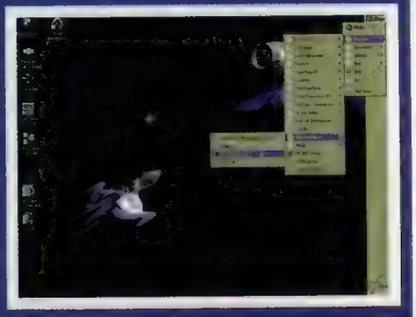
LoadTop=[0/1] **Default: 1**
Purpose: Setting this to 0 stops Windows loading COMMAND.COM, DBLSPACE.BIN and DRVSPACE.BIN into high memory.

Logo=[0/1] **Default: 1**
Purpose: Setting this to 0 stops Windows showing its incredibly annoying logo at startup.

Take note that the MSDOS.SYS file is naturally a hidden/system/read only file and as such you'll need to drop to a DOS box and type: ***attrib -r -s -h msdos.sys*** before editng the file. After editing, replace these settings with: ***attrib +r +s +h msdos.sys***

SMART STARTS

Don't like the Start bar the bottom of the screen? Move it! Just drag the bar to the either side of the screen and then, if you desire, to the top of the screen. Learn something new every day!



ORACLE

Merry Christmas everyone!

Oracle
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St.
Redfern
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Yes, this month the Oracle has donned his Santa hat and is giving out good cheer to all those who wrote in. Have a very safe and Happy Christmas and may you all get plenty of new adventure games with brilliant flashes of inspiration with which to solve them with!

Pandemonium

Can you please help me? My young son (he is only 5) has been playing Pandemonium but is unfortunately stuck around level 4. He has been driving me crazy to get him past this level but I can't because I am all thumbs!
Would you know the codes for the levels? I realise this is quite unsportsman-like, but stuff it.
Kym

Hey, that's the entire point of the Oracle, to be unsportsmanlike!! :)
PANDEMONIUM - Level & Cheat Codes
1. OMAAEBIA
2. NAABEBAI
3. ENAIAKBI
4. PEIAIBBA
5. KFCACICE
6. AFICBAIM
7. NGIAIBJJ
8. EHIIAKAC
9. NIIAIBKB
10. AHICBAJE
11. LOCACMGI
12. KACACIIM
13. OAIAIDLB
14. ELIIAODC
15. OEIAIELJ
16. OGIAJEEB
17. AHMCBCMD
18. AJECBDEF
FIRE: AOIMFPIJ
ICE: AOEMDPIJ
SHRINK: AOMMHPIJ



The Neverhood

I'm stuck in The Neverhood. I have gone through the bolted green door and crossed the bridge to the cannon where there is something that might be a radio, and a yellow room. I have put together the blocks in the room, fired the cannon and emptied the lake. But I don't know what I'm supposed to do next, whether I have to make a series out of those shapes on the cannon's control panel and shoot it again - if I do I haven't succeeded - or what. I went back to the mailbox and it told me the fifth ring turns on the radio. I pulled the fifth ring. Nothing. I would appreciate your help.
Justin Otto
New Zealand

Okay Justin, after watching the Lake Drain go back into the West Hall (the room with the puzzle that goes up and down when you click on the ' end of it). Click on the end piece to lower the stairs. Now go back out and you will find that the bridge has been lowered. When you see the radio, turn it on by going back to the place where you woke up at the beginning of the game and pull the correct ring. Give each of them a tug (there is a hint for this on the wall of lake floor which can be found by riding the green putt-putt car).

Star Trek Deep Space Nine: Harbinger

I am stuck in Star Trek Deep Space Nine: Harbinger. I have received Quark's help, crossed the disappearing bridge and pressed the control buttons on the panel but all I get is a noise and nothing happens.
What do I have to do to get the holoprogram to appear?
Andrew Holz
Illawarra, NSW

You're real close to the end there Andrew, So I'll give you the solution all the way to the end!
After speaking to Quark, you arrive in a room with a panel in the centre of it. Find a stair and climb it to the third level. At the second level there's a bridge to the central control room from the maze. Don't cross it yet. Turn on the hologram. Ask him to build a ship. Give this classification for the ship : ATTACKED, LONG, FAST, YES TO BIOLOGICAL UNIT, SUPERIOR, ENHANCED. Then ask him to call the Master Control. He'll ask you for the access code. Get it from Odo and Rhoon in the communication room at Central Control room (use the bridge to reach there).
The code is Invoke Master Control. He'll ask you to reroute the communication. Go back to the communication room. Talk to Odo and click on the panel (just the button on the middle, there are 5 button there). Go back to Master Control and watch when he talks to Rhoon. You can Invoke Tactical just to gain the info, but beware to choose the right answer when he asks you (promise him to destroy the master control) or you'll end up DEAD.



DESTROYING TACTICAL CONTROL
Find Quark and ask him for his reflection device. Set the device to the reflection mode. Go back to Master Control. Activate the device when you reach the hologram. Activate the hologram. It'll inform you that the ship is ready. Invoke Tactical. Give him the info that tactical control program has failed in its task. Ask him to purge the system. After that, go to the room where you find Quark. Look for a cylinder on the ground. Shoot it with your phaser. Go back to hologram room. The master control program is there and he'll inform you that your ship, Hornet, is ready to fly. Watch the sequence. And for the final mission, destroy the Nemesis.

Blood

Please Help me! I've just purchased Blood and keep getting killed. Could you PLEASE give me some cheats eg. God Mode, Full Ammo/ Full Stuff/ All Guns/ All Keys etc.
Aaron Shepherd

To enter a cheat code, you must press 'T' to go into talk mode, then type in the code and press ENTER. Cheating will cause the game to not tell you how many kills or secrets there should be on that level, or how many of each you have managed to achieve.
Here they all are:
BUNZ = All Weapons, Ammo and Guns Akimbo.
CALGON = Level Warp.





CAPINMYASS = Disable God Mode.
COUSTEAU = 200 health. Scuba suit.
EDMARK Displays = "Those were the days".
EVA GALLI = Toggle Clipping.
FORK BROUSSARD = No Ammo, Armor or Items. 1 Health. Delirium.
FUNKY SHOES = Super-Jump.
GOONIES = Gives you the full map of the level.
GRISWOLD = All Armor.
HONGKONG = Same as "LARA CROFT".
I WANNA BE LIKE KEVIN = God Mode.
IDAHO = All Ammo & Weapons.
JOJO = Delerium.
KEYMASTER = All Keys.
KEVORKIAN = Suicide.
KRUEGER = Sets you on fire. Displays "Flame Retardant".
LARA CROFT = All Weapons & Infinite Ammo. Displays "Lara Rules."
MCGEE = Sets you on fire. Displays "You're Fired".
MONTANA = All Ammo, Weapons and Items.
NOCAPINMYASS = God Mode.
ONERING = Invisibility.
RATE = Displays current frame rate.
SATCHEL = All Items.
SPIELBERG = Level Warp. Disables all cheats.
SPORK = 200 Health.
STERNO = Temporary Blindness.
TEQUILA = Guns Akimbo.
VOORHEES = Displays "I will not cheat, I will not cheat" and if repeated "I am a compulsive cheater"

TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY

I'm having some trouble in Relentless 2 Twinsen's Odyssey. How do I get the ring to open the ball of Sendell. Also I have been to Zechich and back and I have to find the children, please help me...

BRUNO DANIELE
SYDNEY, N.S.W.

To get the ball of Sendell, you need the pearl to create the lightning spell. Go back to Citadel Island and drop the pearl in the not-boiling cauldron in the Weather Wizard's Tent. You should now get the lightning spell which you can use to get Sendell's ball from the Sewers.

To get the pearl, on Desert Island, next to the harbour, is an alien with a gun behind some boxes, and a trash can over off further. In between them is a small path that you can walk through which leads to a wooden dock. On the dock is a bell. Ring the bell and a small turtle will come up to you, and offer you a ride into a small cave. When you're inside, you should see one big mother of an oyster behind a pit of spikes. You can't jump, but you can fly. Use your jetpack and hover over to the oyster, and take the pearl.

With the pearl, go back to Citadel Island and drop the pearl in the not-boiling cauldron in the Weather Wizard's Tent. You should now get the lightning spell.

DRAGON LORE 2

I would like your help regarding Dragon Lore 2 which I recently bought. I am stuck just after the Coronation joust when Chariachan challenges you to fight to the death. However, whenever I hit him, I don't do any damage. Do I have to use the crystallion on him?

WARWICH THOMPSON
RUTHERGLEN, VIC

Well Warwich, you're almost there, here's the entire solution. At the coronation joust, summon Maraach with your Ring of Fire. Then ride him to the Cradle of the Sun, where the Coronation Joust take place.

Talk to Arthus. Then wear your Ring of Fire and The Sword of Fire/Sacred Pike (it's your choice on weapon). Turn around and talk to Tanathea. Then face Duke Eragg. Cariachan will shows up riding Dagon, his evil dragon ally. Watch the joust. After you win it, Cariachan will protest the result. Fight him to the death. If you use the Sword of Fire, don't forget to cast the burning Spell on it. Then watch the ending movie. Once again you're the hero of the valley. Too bad the wall of Obsidian has been destroyed by the orcs. So prepare for the next adventure of Werner von Wallenrod in Dragon Lore III.

CODE

GO ON THEN, NOBODY'S LOOKING...

SIM FARM

Type in the following codes (while holding down the "shift" key) during gameplay:
CORN =Get 10,000 dollars
FUND = Give 10,000 dollars to the town without losing any money
LLAMA = Information about llamas
T = Tests game
V = Gives version number

BIRTHRIGHT - THE GORGON'S ALLIANCE

Press F3 and type (in capitals):
SYNCASH = For money.
SYNADV = Play any Adventure.

BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY OF KAIN

Anytime during the game, press these combinations of buttons to get the following:
FULL HEALTH = up, right, attack, action, up, down, right, left
FULL MAGIC = right, right, attack, action, up, down, right, left
PREVIEW DARK DIARY = left, right, attack, action, up, down, right, left

COMANCHE 3

When in flight press 'R' and enter one of the following:
ratz = invisible
cowz = freeze
ipig = overload
cat9 = damage
dog9 = weapons
bat9 = gps hellfires

CONSTRUCTOR

If you are getting too many black marks from the council, get a level two house, and make the tenants 'the punks.' After a while they should start to complain about a hedge and will give you black marks if you do not drastically decrease their rent. Drastically decrease their rent, and you will receive some white marks.



Then put it up again and repeat this until you have no black marks left.
Then either replace them, agree to their demands or make them have children. P.S. if you continue to do this, you will receive many white marks which can be exchanged for cash. (100 marks for 10,000.)

THE CROW "CITY OF ANGELS"

Press the following function keys during the game:
F6 = unlimited energy
F8 = next level part
F9 = no enemies

Darlight Conflict
Hex edit cheat.
HexEdit dl.cfg
goto offset 00000358
change that byte to **32 hexdecimal**
save & exit.
You can now choose any mission you want.

D.O.G.

Type following codes during a mission:
Mmghost = NoCollision Mode
Mmlevitate = NoClipping Mode (drive thru scenery)
Mmtriggerhappy = AMMO refill
Mmfaithnomore = God Mode
Mmferrari = New Buggy available
Mmactivate = Mission Objectives Completed
Mmjustice = Destroy all Enemies
Mmparanoide = BoosterPack for your Buggy

FALLOUT

This cheat makes unlimited turns (you can shoot the guys without them getting a turn to wipe you out).
Step one: Go into combat mode.
Step two: Take ammo for a gun and put it in to your hands (only ammo should be in your hand!)
Step three: come close to a guy and click on target to shoot him!
HE will say something like "Did your mama taught you that move?!"
Now you have unlimited turns, when you walk or shoot in combat your green circles shouldn't even move.

JURASSIC WAR

Hit ENTER during game play and a message prompt should appear type the following cheat:
FOOD = 50,000 food

MACHINE HUNTER

The only cheat that's needed is entering **???HOST???** in as the password. This adds a "CHEATS" menu option from which all cheats can be accessed.

POD

During a race, type one of the following code...
LABEL = To get driver name under each car.
RETRO = To get a rear view.
GARAG = Repair the damage of your car.
MAP = Display a map. If you push "F9" after you get the number of others car on this map.
MIRROR MODE
To obtain the mirror mode, you have to edit the file "UBI.INI" who is in the "UbiSoft" directory into the Windows 95 directory. Search the line "[POD2_0]" and put this line just after like that...
[POD2_0]
Tonneau=181 109 119 111 143 8 147 90 146 160
Be carefull about one thing, if you have already a "Tonneau=" line somewhere after [POD2_0] replace it with the new one. It's probably because you have already finish a tournament at the first place for one of the three mode (the way to get the mirror mode for each mode).
In this way, the next time you load the game, the red button is enabled and can invert the track for all three modes of the game.

SHADOW WARRIOR REGISTERED VERSION 1.2

Press 'T' and then enter the code.
SWCHAN = Toggle God mode
SWGIMME = Gives you all items
SWGREED = Enables every cheat
SWSAVE = Saves the current map on disk as SWSAVE.MAP , Which you then can edit with BUILD map editor
SWTREKxy = Warp to level (x=episode, y=level) eg.SWTREK12
SWRES = Change resolution
SWSTART = Restart level
SWGHOST = Toggle clipping mode
SWMAP = Toggle automap
CONFIG = Displays "help config"
SWTRIX = Turn on Bunny Rockets w/ Rocket launcher
WINPACHINKO = Lets you win the pachinko game and get an item
SWNAME = In a multiplayer game, it changes your name.
SOUNDx = Plays Sound file 0-999 (x=Sound File) eg.SOUND 12
SWLOC = Use once, show framerate. Use again, show location in level.

WIPEOUT 2097/XL

Type at the title screen:
RUSH = Silly ships
Type at the main menu:
XTEAM = Enable Piranha team
XCLASS = Enable Phantom class
XTRACK = All tracks
Pause the game during a race and type:
PSYMEGA = Infinite weapons
PSYPROTECT = Infinite energy
PSYTICKER = Infinite time
PSYRAPID = Machine gun
FRAMERATE = Display frame rate

THE PC PowerPlay READER'S SURVEY



Yes indeedy, it's time to play get to know each other again. What are we talking about? We're talking survey time. That mystical, magical time when we try and find out all about you. We care, you see. We care about what you really want from PC PowerPlay. We care because we want to give it to you. So grab a pen and start getting personal (be assured, it's completely confidential).

Win a Banksia WaveSP 56 modem!

To help motivate you, we've scored 4 Banksia WaveSP 56 modems to give away! 4 survey entrants will be drawn randomly on January 5th 1998. A big thanks to Banksia for that. Well, what are you waiting for?

Cut out or copy (only one survey form per person please), and send to:

PC PowerPlay Survey, Reply Paid 634, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR SELECTIONS

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF...

1. What is your age group?

A. Under 18
B. 18 - 22
C. 23 - 30
D. 31 - 39
E. 39 - 49
F. 49+

2. Are you:

A. Male
B. Female

3. What is your marital status?

A. Single
B. Living with partner
C. Married

4. Do you live:

A. Alone
B. With partner/family
C. With friends
D. With your parents

5. How much do you earn?

A. Under $20,000 pa
B. $20,000 - $29,999
C. $30,000 - $39,999
D. $40,000 - $49,999
E. $50,000 - $59,999
F. More than $60,000

6. What do you do?

A. Managerial/professional
B. Executive
C. Clerical
D. Work from home/self employed
E. Manual
F. Retired
F. Full-time education
G. Other

YOUR PC AND YOUR GAMES

7. What's your current system?

A. 486
B. Pentium (or AMD/Cyrix) 60 - 133MHz
C. Pentium 133+
D. Pentium II

8. What's your primary Operating System?

A. Win 95
B. DOS
C. OS/2
D. Other.....

9. Do you have a modem?

A. No
B. 14400
C. 28800
D. 33600
E. 56000

10. Do you have internet access?

Yes/No

11. If Yes, which Net Browser do you use?

A. Netscape
B. MS Internet Explorer
C. Other

12. Do you subscribe to any online game server? (Kali, Multiplay, Wireplay etc)

Yes/No

13. Do you regularly visit the Australian games site, Hyper@ctive(www.hyperactive.com)?

Yes/No

14. How much have you spent on hardware in the last 12 months?

$

15. How much have you spent on games/software in the last 12 months?

$

16. How often do you play games?

A. Every day
B. Every second day
C. Once a week
D. Once a month or so

17. What are your favourite games at the moment? (Choose more than one if you want).

A. First-person action *(Quake, Redneck Rampage)*
B. Action *(MDK, Hyperblade)*
C. Real Time Strategy *(Dark Reign, Total Annihilation)*
D. Turn-Based Strategy *(Master of Orion 2, X-Com)*
E. RPG *(Lands of Lore 2, Betrayal in Antara)*
F. Driving/Racing *(Moto Racer, POD)*
G. Flight Sim *(Jet Fighter III, EF 2000)*
H. Action Adventure *(Tomb Raider, Ecstatica 2)*
I. Fantasy Flight Sim *(X-Wing vs. TIE, Privateer 2)*
J. Adventure *(Dog Day, City of Lost Children)*
K. Puzzle *(Baku Baku, Bust-a-Move 2)*
L. Sports *(FIFA 97, Cricket 97)*
M. Multiplayer *(QuakeWorld, Dark Reign)*
N. Online game *(Diablo, Red Alert)*
O. Online RPG *(Ultima Online, Meridan 59)*

18. Where do you normally buy your games?

A. Department or large chain store
B. Specialist game shop
C. Mail order
D. Privately/classifieds
E. Other (please specify)

WHAT ABOUT US THEN?

19. Is there anything you don't like about PC PowerPlay?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

20. What do you think of the regular sections?

Please score between 1-5 (5 being best)

News
Previews
Interviews
Features
Reviews
Tech.Txt
Setup
Oracle
Code
Webstalk

21. Are you getting enough?

	MORE	ABOUT RIGHT	LESS
News			
Previews			
Interviews			
Features			
Reviews			
Tech.Txt			
Setup			
Oracle			
Code			
Webstalk			

22. Is there anything new or different you'd like to see in PC PowerPlay?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

23. Does a game's rating and review in PC PowerPlay influence your purchase?

Yes/No

24. What other magazines do you buy?

A. Rolling Stone
B. Hyper
C. Official Australian Playstation Magazine
D. Internet.au
E. Australian Personal Computer
F. PC User
G. PC Format
H. Australian PC World
i. PC Zone
j. Other.....

24. Have you purchased:

A. PC PowerPlay Hot Hardware Guide
B. PC PowerPlay Game Guide



hyper@ctive

http://hyperactive.com.au

GAMES ONLINE

LETTERS

write to PC PowerPlay
LETTERS
PO BOX 634
REDFERN, NSW 2016
letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Letter of the month! Win a subscription!

Each month we'll choose a letter that we think is THE BEST that month. Not the funniest (although we reserve the right to hand out a freebie if a letter makes us laugh HARD), but the most intelligent, the most incisive, the most informed.
The winner gets a
FREE 6 MONTH SUBSCRIPTION!
Existing subscribers get 6 months added to their term. How good is that!

NZ censorship

I, like every other gamer in New Zealand, am deeply concerned over the proposed censorship/classification laws here. Firstly, the games industry(in NZ) is just getting to its feet, we have new stores springing up and a much wider range being stocked than ever before. The prices have also dropped substantially from around the $120 - $150 point to where they are now at around $70 - $120 for new releases, and congratulations must go to who ever is responsible for this price drop.

Now with the huge expenses that games developers are looking at just to get the game classified (aside from marketing and distribution costs), are likely to deter the developers from even bothering with NZ considering how small the market is here. And for those that do persist and actually release the game here, just imagine who will absorb the extra costs, the end user.

I'm not against the classification of games but surely, with the majority of our games coming via Australia, with a rating already attached to the box, isn't that enough? I agree that young kids shouldn't be exposed to excessive levels of graphic violence, it really depends on the kind of supervision at home as to what affect this violence will have on the user. But why deprive the adult (majority?) gaming population by withdrawing or banning certain games from sale? Besides, the young children these classifications (supposedly) protect are hardly in a position to be buying $100 games without a parent present any way.

As for the people that actually classify the games, I presume they will be the same ones that classify films here also. I have worked in the cinema industry for the last 3 years and from personal experience, have seen some wildly varying ratings attached to films. I've seen terribly violent (I am not by any means against violence in films or games) receive "M" ratings that anyone can see, and yet other films with considerably less violence have an "R18" slapped on them. In some instances films have actually been delayed (The Rock, for example) while the film distributors try and get the rating lowered (hence giving the film a greater market). My point is that if these types of inconsistencies are abound in the classification of films, then what are these people going to come up with in the case of an 80 hour game? The mind boggles at the terrible state the NZ games market could deteriorate to if these draconian measures are introduced, will NZ simply be overlooked by games distributors? If we are, then who could blame them...

It looks like Australian mail order games stores will suddenly have a lot of orders from New Zealand.

Scott Bartley
NZ

Crash and burn

I made the mistake a couple of days ago of buying Microsoft Flight Simulator 98 for Windows 95. It is claimed to be 'The most significant upgrade to Flight Sims by Microsoft ever'. Well, that's a crock of shite! I have tried all of the available options in the graphics panel to help speed up the frame rate, but it still remains absolutely pathetic. Microsoft also claim quite clearly on the box that FS98 is, "The world leader in flight simulation for the PC -FS98 is simply as real as it gets." I'm sorry, but this is bordering on plain old false advertising! The flight model of each of the aircraft remains as mediocre as it always has, and is many YEARS behind what is available in practically any other flight sim, combat oriented or not. How on earth can Microsoft make these false claims and get away with it? They have also done another typical Microsoft thing, ie, released a product that supports almost nothing that its very successful predecessor (FS95) uses, such as the many, many third party aircraft and third party panels for those air-

Software Piracy

It amazes me when I read articles like "Superhighway Robbery" in issue 17. If piracy is as rampant as you and others say, why is so little being done to stop the problem. The tax department has thousands of staff, why aren't there more people employed to catch software pirates? On an international level, why don't countries like the USA, UK, Germany, France and Australia organise sanctions against countries like China and Vietnam, who obviously think it is fine to steal software? With so little being done to stop piracy I sometimes wonder if there is more to it than we are told.

Mark Watson

Interested to read your section on software pirates in issue 17. Something I would like to point out about software piracy, and which everyone forgets, is that consumers themselves often encourage software piracy. I am a PC reseller and network consultant who sells many PCs to students and families. You would not believe the pressure some people put on myself and my consultants to 'load' PCs with software they don't have and don't intend to purchase. "Can I get it pre loaded with Windows 95 and not buy the CD?" Or, "can you give me some games?", and some people are brazen enough to ask for copies of packages such as MS Office (I have even had one guy wanting Macromedia Director on his system for free !). My answer to this and my staff's answer is always NO. Simply, we have to purchase this software, and it is our OEM license that suffers for them, and ethics aside, it is simply not good business to do so, selling a user a supported package with documentation can and WILL save hours of problems later. So the next time you buy a new computer remember one thing - if you get pre loaded software make sure that you receive full ORIGINAL documentation and CD/disks. If you want a program buy it! In the long run, you and the entire computer industry will benefit as manufacturers need this money to continue to improve and innovate. Piracy is not a victimless crime - everybody pays eventually.

John Harvey

I am writing this letter to complain about the cost of PC game prices. I'm 14 years old, not old enough to work yet and don't get much pocket money, so most of the brilliant games that come out our out of my reach. Why should we have to pay upwards of a $100 for a piece of circular plastic put in a cardboard box with a 10-page manual (if that)? PC games prices are on par with console games today. Why? Companies that release games for consoles have to pay royalties to Sony and Nintendo, so they are understandably at that price, but PC companies don't need to do that, yet they still charge that extra $20 dollars or so to make their wallets fatter. They'll probably say that PC game prices are that price due to software piracy, but part of the piracy problem is the cost. A lot of people who can't afford games, so their other choice is to get a cheaper or free copy of it. Maybe if the software companies charged $20 or $30 dollars less they would flush the pirates out of the market. People will pay $60 dollars for a boxed game with a manual instead of $40 dollars for a blank gold CD in a case. Also, some of us pay up to $90 dollars for a game, only to find out it is very buggy, or they can't be bothered to release a 3D Accelerator patch because they've already got your cash and it'd cost them money to make one. Well, there's my whinge, keep up the great work on your magazine.

Ewan Fleming

Your article on pirate software was excellent.

However I tend to think that the emphasis on reducing the amount of pirating should also be the responsibility of the game developers and resellers. The high cost of software, gaming and otherwise, is the fundamental reason for piracy. Even as a working professional I cannot afford most of the games I would like to purchase. If the games were half the price I know that I would be buying twice as many of them. paying $100 for a game is totally ridiculous and encourages software pirates. I feel that there are plenty of ways to improve the value of software that should be encouraged. Selling over the internet, level editors, and pay-as-you-use games like Ultima online could all increase the value of the games we buy.

Jim Storey

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Let them eat Quake

When we are talking phenomena, and I mean real and tangible phenomena, have you ever noticed how society gets carried away with itself. Take for example the World Championship for Rubik Cube Solving. Some Danish guy could solve a Rubik's cube in under 20 seconds. He even oils up his Rubik cube to shave a few seconds off his best times. I can remember a classic 80's show called That's Incredible where they collected all the greatest PacMan players from around the world to have a Pac Off. There were around 10 machines that were set to super fast in which the last Paccer playing was the Pac Man Champion of the Entire World. I believe that Quake is heading that way too. One day it's going come down to only two grunts facing each other, then Bickety-Boom! We have a winner! Remember kids:

"There can be only one."

Mat Brady :)

PS: You know what's really interesting. There was an animated television series called Rubik The Magical Cube where Rubik helped out a little boy with his magical powers. Then there was the Pac Man cartoon about the adventures of Mr and Mrs Pac Man in Pac land where all the other Pac people were all yellow as well. (Kind of like a precursor to The Simpsons really.)

I wonder if Quake will get its own cartoon?

craft. They claim they will be releasing a converter patch program to take planes from FS95 to FS98, but wouldn't it have been plain common sense to make that patch available when FS98 was released? (The 'standard' planes are about as interesting as watching paint dry.) There will be NO panel converter, so every panel that has been hand made for FS95 will have to have many more hours spent on them to make them work with FS98. There are many excellent panels available for FS95, and now they cannot be used with the new sim - How smart is that?

Bill Sherwood.

Hexed

I was planning to get Hexen II but I decided to get the demo from the net first just to test it out, and my god how disappointed I was. My computer is a P200 MMX with 32MB of RAM, 2MB of video RAM and a 3Dfx card and the game was staggering and jerky even when I selected the lowest res. Hexen II is produced by the Quake engine isn't it. How come Quake was so impressively and beautifully smooth even at 800 x 600 res and Hexen II is pathetically and disappointingly jerky at 320 x 200. Also there was not enough ammo for the 'assassin' classed character to use because the 'Archers' don't always drop ammo (only once after I killed about 8 archers and the ammo picked up is just enough to kill 1 or 2 archers. Is Hexen II supposed to be played the same way as Quake? ie little need to conserve ammo because there is more than enough ammo to last the whole level, or Hexen II requires a new way of playing?) But more importantly is the full game the same thing, staggering and jerky? If it is so how will the overall game be rated in terms of playability? I don't know whether other people will be impressed by H2 or disappointed (like me).

Kevin Lau

FMV or not to FMV

I am appalled at the way people compare Wing Commanders' 3 + 4 in comparison to the two earlier Wing Commanders. I personally think that they are two of the best games (not 4 as much as 3). In Wing Commander 1, after a mission you would probably go to the bar, talk to the barkeep and several other people in little animated sequences where their lips barely even move and you are required to read the text. All they have done in Wing Commander 3 + 4 is replaced the animated talking sequences with live actors and sound. I do agree that in Wing Commander 4 they went a bit (OK, a lot) overboard with the FMV but still the games had an great plot which made me want play it to the very end. As for in-flight FMV, over the coms you would have another green animation always the same as the last and the words were shown over the game. If you ask me the FMV DOES help. It also adds to the

CREATION



+

EVOLUTION

=

AURAN

We're looking for creative programmers, producers , game designers and artists to help us take the next step in our evolution.

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AURAN

realism of the game and gives you the feel of actually being there unlike cartoon animations. All the other factors of the game are severely improved as well like the space combat, the plot was brilliant and memorable and overall design of the game was plain better. In some games FMV does go too far, eg. StarTrek Borg, but why does everyone refer to Wing Commander as being the worst offender? I can't wait for Wing Commander 5 to come out to see how it turns out (I think there may be too little FMV).

Matthew Blume

Smart shoppers

Why are people so unknowledgeable that they'll go to big expensive superstores to buy computers, being led in by TV ads and catalogues or because it makes them feel they've got a guaranteed safe deal. What rubbish! At most of these superstores they rip customers off charging up to 3 times the amount they would pay for the same system at a humble and cheap small business computer store. Furthermore, there are a lot of them out there. People today are getting over-charged. They should take the opportunity, pick up the yellow pages or turn to the back of the business section of the Sydney Morning Herald, and shop around, Why they are still being conned into wasting their money at a nicely done-up superstore when at the end of the day they're getting the same thing?

Hillary Cam

Manual par excellence

In a past editorial (yes, I read them), Mr Mansill mentioned his annoyance of on-line gaming manuals, largely replacing printed manuals, Well, it seems the guys and girls at Activision and Auran have read your bit and come up with a quality,120 plus page, card bound, printed manual with a gold foil symbol!

A compelling nine-page story, easy to follow instructions, pretty pictures and diagrams, six page chocoblock full of production credits, the compulsory note pages and even ads for Activision, make up for one great ready and one sturdy book to hit people with. And best of all, it's all in colour!

So game companies, take a good look and develop even more of these cardboard weapons.

Herman Rethuan.

FREAK of the month



A day in the life of a death

Sweat runs down my face as I tighten my grip on my combat shotgun, the only weapon at my disposal. Running carefully around a corner, I hear a grunt and the unmistakeable sound of a body landing on the ground. Quickly turning around, I raise my shotgun and run back around the corner. Standing there, wielding a rocket launcher is the green and blue clad figure of Loony, one of my most vicious adversaries. Seeing me with only a shotgun, Loony yells a scream of triumph, and brings up his rocket launcher. As I close my eyes and wait for the blast, I hear him scream again, this time with anguish and disappointment. Opening my eyes I see parts of Loony spread along the corridor and, looking up, Rubbaman grinning with glee and reloading his grenade launcher. I stand still for a second, breathing a sigh of relief, then start running backwards, realising that the next grenade will be for me. Circle strafing around the platform, I let off a couple of shells, and hear a strangled scream. One last round, and the limp body falls to the floor in front of me. One dead camper.

Ducking into an alcove, I eagerly take hold of the rocket launcher that awaits me. Checking the ammo, five rockets, I run out of the alcove, ready for anything that gets thrown in my direction. Which it does, in the form of Nagash, another close enemy. Seeing my rocket launcher, he does a quick 180 and turns back the way he came. Taking aim, I launch off a round, and laugh evilly as it explodes against the wall next to him, blowing apart half of his arm, leaving it hanging by his side. Knowing that he has no chance, Nagash turns around and with one hand starts firing towards me with his nailgun. Dodging shards of metal flying past at high speeds, I get closer and take aim. Before I can fire, a stray nail pierces my arm, while another one hits my thigh and I fall onto my knees, dropping my rocket launcher. A sneer appears on Nagash's face, as he pulls out and loads his double barrelled shotgun, and walks closer. Pressing the barrels of his gun against the side of my head, Nagash steadies his finger above the trigger. "You're fu...." In one smooth movement, I reach behind and grasp the handle of my axe and swing it towards Nagash. With one sweep I lop his gun hand off, watching as it drops useless to the floor. The second swing I aim at his neck and, without a problem, decapitate him. His head rolls for a bit, then stops, looking up at me with a surprised look on it's ugly face. Painfully picking up my rocket launcher, I go in search for a health kit...

Experience the effect being a Freak of the Month can have on your social life. Statistically, 99% of all F.O.T.M's go on to remain a single, anti-social degenerates for years after being outed by PowerPlay. Send in a photo of your gaming station, a screenshot of your desktop and a couple of hundred words of pure dribble. A pic of your head is optional.

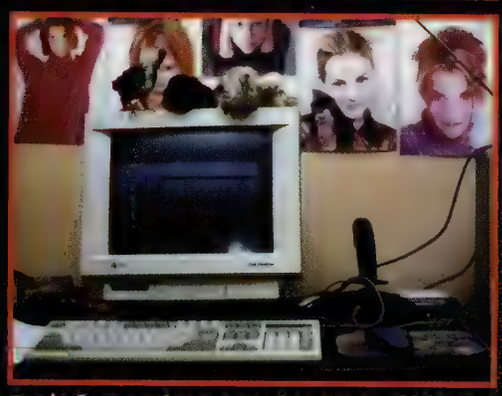
Freak File:

Ben Slinger

Age: 16
Profession: Erm...student? I deliver junk mail
Likes: Quake, Surfing the web, Going to the swimming pool/beach and watching the women in bikinis.....
Dislikes: Dislikes - Duke 3d, People who beat me at games :o(
Favourite sport: Kick Boxing
Favourite food: Whatever's handy
Favourite drink: Pepsi
Favourite TV: The Simpsons
Favourite music: +Live+, and most other rock
Top three favourite games of all time: Quake, Warcraft 2, Any of the Lucasarts adventure games
Top three multiplayer games: Quake, Warcraft 2, Carmageddon
Top three games you're looking forward to: Unreal, Dark Reign, Quake 2
Online Nickname: Dopefish
Web page/s - Unreal Fantasies (http://fantasies.unreal.org), The Dopefish Pond (http://www.ozemail.com.au/~sijcomp/dopefish/)
Longest time playing a game and what was it: Most recently, Dungeon Keeper, for about 5 hours
How long with computers: Approx 15 yrs, on my dad's old computer. I typed my name!!
Wish other computers: Can't remember them all : 386SX-20 Clone, 486DX2-66 Clone. Then there were the old XT's and AT's, probably about 3 of them :o)

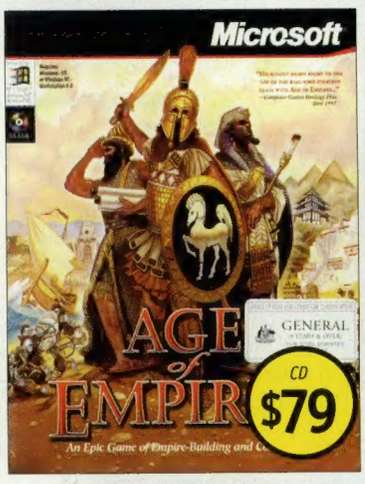
SYSTEM

Name - Eric
Model - Custom Built
CPU - Intel Pentium 100Mhz
RAM - 24MB
Motherboard - Triton II
L2 Cache - 512k
BIOS - Award
Drive - 1 Gig Western Digital, Creative Labs 8X CDROM
Video - Diamond Stealth 2000, 2MB
3D - Orchid Righteous 3D
Monitor - ETC 15"
Sound - Sound Blaster AWE32
Network - NE2000
Joystick - Microsoft Sidewinder 3D Pro
Operating System - Win95
Extras - Car speakers in homemade case (Gotta keep 'em away from the monitor though).
Part of a four Pentium network - all games on the 3 gig file server.
Weird Stuff - Don't get too close to them rats...



Ben's farmyard/gamestation. Rats, chickens & an obsession with Claire Daines. PowerPlay readers are a healthy bunch...

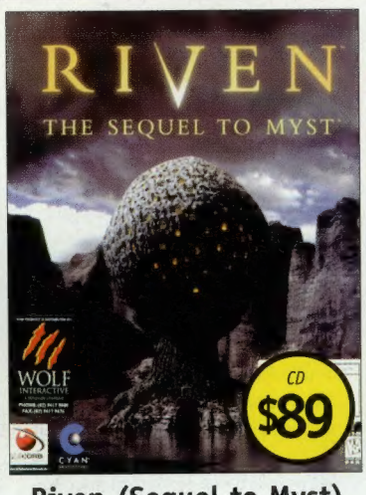
LATEST GAME SPECIALS



Age of Empires
Win 95



Dark Forces 2 Jedi Knight
Win 95



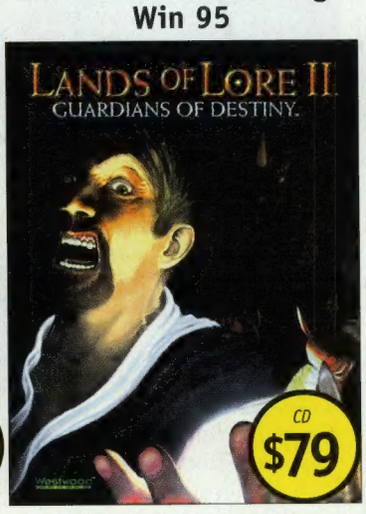
Riven (Sequel to Myst)
Win 95/MacOS



Need for Speed 2 SE
Win 95



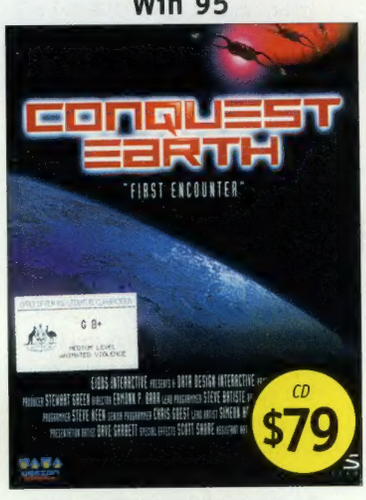
Total Annihilation
Win 95



Lands of Lore 2
Win 95



Cricket 97 - Ashes Tour Ed.
Win 95



Conquest Earth
DOS/Win 95

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Signature Expiry Date.....

Begin

Long before Interplay decided to grace us with an aging William Shatner in Star Fleet Academy, a game existed which encompassed all aspects of Star Trek tactical simulation bar furry aliens and sick-minded 70s color schemes. In fact, even while a young, bald, child by the name of Picard honed his wine tasting skills behind a shed on the vineyard, this game was training the best of the best for starship combat.

The game is called BEGIN, and there's nothing else like it. Straight off the bat I can fairly say it's the most in-depth Star Trek tactical simulation you're ever likely to play. Like many old games Begin doesn't rely on fancy graphics, FMV or questionable acting talent. It can't, it's an 80s shareware game, what do you expect?

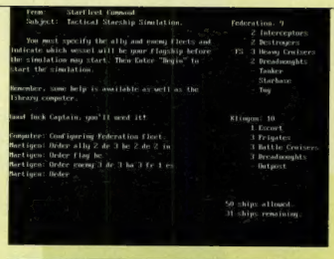
RTFM, please

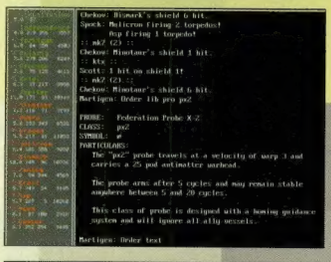
The simulation is far too in-depth to fully explain here, so my first suggestion is that you read the manual. Yes, go on, do it. It's worth it. Because Begin revolves around you commanding your ship through the use of English phrases, you'll be completely lost unless you know the commands you can issue and how to use them. That said, I'll tell you a little bit about how it plays and some of the features.

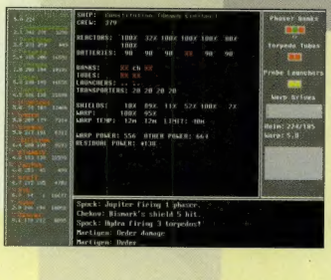
There are four sides in Begin: Federation, Klingon, Romulan and Orion Pirate. Each has a plethora of ships covering all areas from small fighters to dreadnoughts and space stations. Each individual craft has unique statistics for power, turn rate, torpedo models, phaser charge times and so on. Like any strategy, knowing your enemy is the key to success. Knowing yourself helps too, by the way, so it's good to read up on the ship you're commanding. Getting information can be done before you start a game and during a game by issuing the LIBRARY or COMPUTER (said with thick Scottish accent) command, followed by the category and sub-category (such as FEDERATION, SHIPS, HEAVY CRUISER).

It's a game Jim, but not as we know it...

The game itself is all about setting up a tactical simulation, and then playing it. You do so by selecting the number and type of craft on each side (the ALLY and ENEMY commands, each followed by a hull type. Use FLAG to set the hull type of the flagship — the one you command). Of course it's possible to set up a simulation where you outnumber the enemy, but easy victories give you no score. To be rated by your superiors in the simulation you MUST setup a scenario where you are outnumbered or disadvantaged — the real skill of strategy is being able to win from an underhanded position. The more disadvantaged you are, the more points you'll score (assuming you survive).







Commanding your ship, and other ships in the fleet, is done through phrased commands. You can directly pilot the craft to any location (with HELM) or issue summary commands (such as PURSUE, EVADE). You can independently target your phasers and torpedoes to different targets or one target, fire them individually or all at once and fire in a spread of any angle you choose (this is real Star Trek ship combat! Apart from the Romulans, all races must fire straight line torpedoes. You can maximise your chances of a hit by firing in a 'spread' of up to 45 degrees). You can order fleet ships to concentrate their fire, board enemy vessels, escort your own craft, evade and just about any command you can issue your own ship. Depending on the side you're playing, your captains may obey you or turn tail and run. You can manage ship damage, bring down/raise and reinforce individual shield banks, disable/enable individual phasers and torp bays, self destruct, cloak, remotely detonate probes, dock with space stations and much more. Begin takes in just about every aspect of the ST space combat universe and holds it true. Even firing torpedoes requires you to first issue a LOAD command to specify what torp model you want to fire.

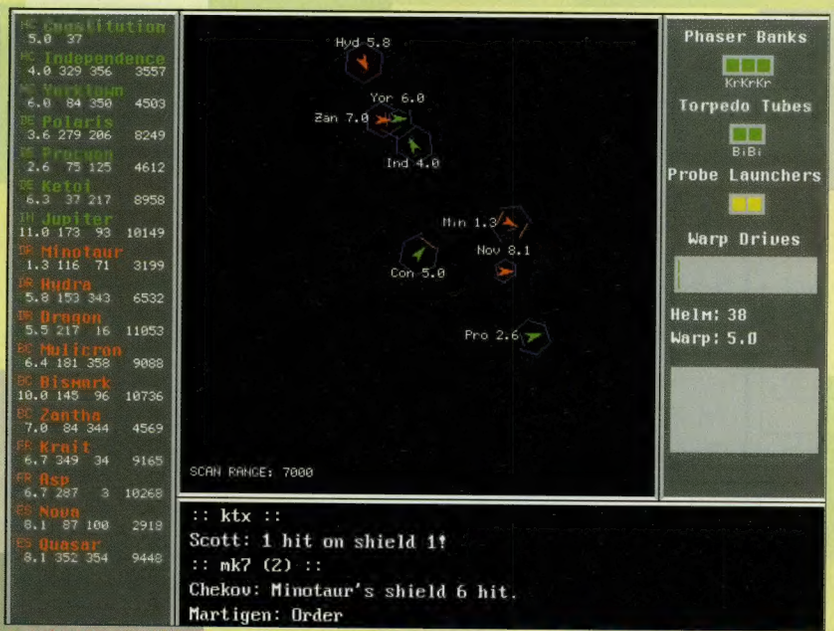
Ships don't just blow up, more often than not you damage the hulls so much that life support fails and the hull drifts aimlessly through space. Beware those ships that do blow up, if you're too close you'll die in the explosion, especially if the ship was carrying a suicide bomb (common to Klingon and Romulan ships). Life support failing? Order a fleet ship to come by and beam over to it, thereby taking command of that ship.

The depth is just brilliant — with such diversity you feel just like Kirk in Star Trek 2, battling Khan in the nebula, drawing on every ounce of knowledge of your ship and strategy to win... don't be surprised if you barely win a scenario, limping away on impulse. These are the battles legends are made of.

Hey, have one!

Begin is one of those old games that is incredibly hard to chase down (there's probably three places in the world you can find it, one of which is my HD). So, rather than let you drool with anticipation, you'll find it on this month's PowerPlay CD. Don't you just love this mag?

Ashton Mills



Put the 'Star Trek' name on something weird & comercially doubtful & you've got a winner



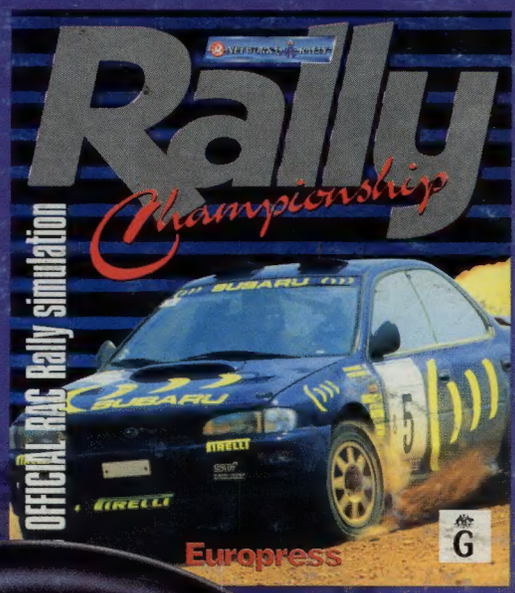


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